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HAMLET STUDIES

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on

THE TRAGEDIE OF
HAMLET, Prince of Denmarke.

Vol. 3 Summer 1981 No. 1

RAYMOND SOUTHALL : **The Hamlet Syndrome**

KENNETH S. ROTHWELL : **"Hamlet," Duplessis-Mornay, and the "Irenic" Vision**

JANE L. DONAWERTH : **The Language of Voice, Expression, and Gesture in "Hamlet"**

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Book Review

R.N. PARKINSON : *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* by Bertrand Evans

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The Hamlet Syndrome

RAYMOND SOUTHALL

No other play by Shakespeare, nor indeed by any other playwright, has been the subject of as much controversy and speculation as *Hamlet*. Other Shakespearian plays are as puzzling but none have proved as attractive as this one. Why this has been so is not entirely clear. It would be easier to understand if it was obvious that the play represented Shakespeare at his best and yet this is not the impression one receives. Indeed, T.S. Eliot remarked of the most popular lines of the play, Hamlet's two famous soliloquies, that whilst their versification is Shakespeare's their content appears to be another's.[1]

Eliot's observation carries us some way towards a fuller understanding of the play, although it misrepresents the first of the two soliloquies, "O! that this too too solid flesh would melt" (I.2). In this soliloquy Hamlet expresses a desire that his body should "Thaw and resolve itself into a dew." A few lines later he reveals the source of his world-weariness when he refers to the world as "an unweeded garden/That grows to seed," adding, "things rank and gross in nature possess it merely." To grasp the full implications of this image of the world as a garden one needs to refer to its use by the gardener and servant in *Richard II*, III, 4. However, without making that reference it can be seen that, according to the metaphor, Hamlet's dissolution would be a boon to all that is rotten in his world, for it is imagined as a dew and a dew would strengthen and freshen the weeds, the "things rank and gross in nature." We come to realize not many lines later why the Prince's death would be such a special boon to the corruption of the times; "on his choice," Laertes tells Ophelia, "depends the safety and the health of the whole state" (1.3). This responsibility is accepted by Hamlet when, after meeting the Ghost, he declares despairingly,

> The time is out of joint, O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right! (I.5)

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[1] T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet," *Selected Essays* (3rd ed., London: Faber & Faber, 1951), p. 145.

That declaration also carries forward the second point made by the metaphor: that confronted with the rottenness in the state of Denmark, Hamlet, overcome with world-weariness, would rather dissolve into nothingness than take positive action to fulfil his responsibility and his destiny. The metaphor, then, in which Hamlet's death is represented as a dew which will give sustenance to the very corruption that drives him to desire death, expresses with Shakespearian economy and dramatic anticipation the predicament in which the Prince is to be locked. In short, the dramatic content of the first soliloquy resides in the implications of metaphor in a way which is distinctively Shakespearian. In this instance, therefore, Eliot is wrong in maintaining that whilst the versification is Shakespeare's the content is another's.

What Eliot probably had in mind is more evident in the most famous of the soliloquies, which begins forebodingly enough with a rhetorical *questio:*

> To be, or not to be: that is the question:

proceeds to the amplification:

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them?

and then to the argument pro or thesis:

> To die: to sleep;
> No more, and, by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wish'd.

followed by the argument contra or antithesis:

> To die, to sleep;
> To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause. There's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life . . .

The lines are an exercise in rhetoric in which Hamlet, like an accomplished orator, juggles with a possibility that meets with no imaginative response. Unlike the lines of the first soliloquy, which express a similar ambivalence of mind, these reduce Hamlet's predicament to the level of contending platitudes.

Whilst the best known of the soliloquies bears out Eliot's observation, however, it does so in a way which enables us to see that that observation should not be limited to the soliloquy. There are other occasions upon which the Prince indulges in platitudes. After his interview with the Ghost in Act I, scene 5, for instance, we have the following exchange between Horatio, Hamlet, and Marcellus:

Hor. What news, my lord?
Ham. O! wonderful.
Hor. Good my lord, tell it.
Ham. No; you will reveal it.
Hor. Not I, my lord, by heaven!
Mar. Nor I, my lord.
Ham. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?
But you'll be secret?
Mar. } *Hor.* } Ay, by heaven, my lord.
Ham. There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark,
But he's an arrant knave.

Later, in his assumed madness, Hamlet replies in the same vein to Polonius' questions:

Pol. . . . What do you read, my lord?
Ham. Words, words, words.
Pol. What is the matter, my lord?
Ham. Between who?
Pol. I mean the matter you read, my lord.
Ham. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled . . .

Hamlet doesn't monopolise the extended platitude nor the platitude presented as a revelation. Polonius' advice to Laertes (I.5) is another instance of the first of these and his conversation with the King and Queen in Act II, scene 2, is almost a caricature of such revelations by the Prince as those that have just been quoted:

Pol. . . . My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time.
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.

Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.
Queen. More matter, with less art.
Pol. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art . . .

Polonius' rhetoric is particularly ludicrous, of course, because it so plainly offends against his own precept, "brevity is the soul of wit," a precept which the Queen exemplifies in her interjection, "More matter, with less art." At the same time, the Queen's remark underlines the distinction which Polonius himself has made between matter, "the soul of wit," and art, "the limbs and outward flourishes." So that, with these terms in mind, looking back at the passages above, their matter may be said to be commonplace and their art a mere rhetorical playing with words.

Polonius, in his expostulation to the King and Queen, does have a serious message to communicate, of course. He wishes to inform them that Hamlet is mad. But this simple communication is smothered by fatuous oratory: the stock examples of the rhetorical question, a pointless definition and what Polonius himself describes as "a foolish figure." Polonius, in short, gives the impression of a witless trifler, but he does so in a way which alerts us to a similar trait in the Prince; Polonius' rhetorical questions and elaborations represent the same kind of art, if not the same level of competence in that art, as the question and elaboration of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy. The question raised by Hamlet in that soliloquy is a rhetorical *questio*, like those mentioned by Polonius at the beginning of his expostulation; it is (in other words) a matter of art, in the sense of that word employed by the Queen and Polonius. It is an art which represents Hamlet toying verbally with a distinction between life and death in a way which anticipates his much later remark to Horatio, "It is no matter." The question of the real possibilities of life and death is of no matter in the soliloquy, neither in the Queen's sense of *matter*, meaning "substance ("More matter, with less art") nor in the sense of "consequence" given to it later by Hamlet in his conversation with Horatio. How true this is is best demonstrated by comparison with Claudio's response to the alternatives of life and death in *Measure for Measure*. In Claudio's speech, death is directly, even physically, apprehended in the very character of the language used; the point is well made in Dr. Leavis's analysis of the speech in his chapter on Shelley in *Revaluations*.[2] In Hamlet's soliloquy it is, at best, a distant prospect to which the language gives no dramatic nor substantial presence. This is a point about the quality of the poetry that refutes C.S. Lewis's claim that Hamlet is unlike other plays in that in other plays characters "think of dying: no one thinks, in those plays, of being dead. In *Hamlet* we are kept thinking about it all the time."[3] Claudio actually thinks of being dead, whilst *Hamlet* is given over to meditations on death. *Hamlet*, it is true, is full of references to death—a point which Wilson Knight makes too much of in his essay on the play, "The Embassy of Death"[4]—but whilst death is often mentioned, contemplated and dealt out to the characters, it never becomes the imaginatively direct and immediate concern it does in Claudio's speech; it never becomes an imagined sensation.

If the poetry of *Hamlet* is disturbing, disturbing that is in the sense that it frequently seems to fall short of what one might be led to expect from the special regard in which the play has been held, it is so because of one's awareness of what Shakespeare could achieve, as witness the speech in *Measure for Measure*. This is simply to say that if one thought the play had been written by Marston one would not be disturbed by the thinness of its poetry. However, it is not my intention to argue that the quality of the poetry suggests the presence of a hand other than Shakespeare's. One of Shakespeare's major weaknesses as a poet—however this may be justified by him as a dramatist—is a tendency to slacken occasionally and to allow the poetry to become diffuse. Portia's well-known Mercy speech in *The Merchant of Venice* is a case in point, so too is the final speech of Othello; and it is significant that in these speeches, as in Hamlet's soliloquies, there is an uncertainty of tone that cannot in every instance be explained by the exigencies of situation or stage production. Elsewhere I have argued that in Macbeth's speech on Sleep, Shakespeare's attention has slipped, not just Macbeth's, and his control over the play has been temporarily subverted. "It is, admittedly, a serious charge to bring against Shakespeare and yet, unless one can subscribe to the opinion that rhetoric on this occasion pulls him in the dramatically right direction, it seems an unavoidable one."[5]

An indulgence by Shakespeare in rhetoric is not, then, peculiar to

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[2] F.R. Leavis, *Revaluations* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1953), pp. 225-7.

[3] C.S. Lewis, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" in *Selected Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 99.

[4] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1965), pp.17-46.

[5] Raymond Southall, *The Courtly Maker* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), p. 155.

Hamlet. To the instances mentioned in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, others could be added, such as the Duke's soliloquy, "He who the sword of heaven will bear," in *Measure for Measure*. It has been suggested that these lines of the Duke are not the work of Shakespeare, but I see no reason for questioning his authorship of them on the grounds of their poetic quality alone. Almost anyone could have written them, it is true, but then almost anyone could have written Macbeth's apostrophe to Sleep. In any case, they have much in common with Portia's Mercy speech, Othello's final speech, and Hamlet's most famous soliloquy.

It should not, of course, be necessary to argue that the quality of Shakespeare's poetry is uneven; what Carew said of Jonson's plays is equally true of Shakespeare's—

> Though one hand form them, and though one brain strike
> Soules into all, they are not all alike.[6]

Indeed, the unevenness of Shakespeare's performance is part of his fascination; it is part of the fascination of, say, *The Merchant of Venice*, which opens with the poetry of *Coriolanus* and closes with that of *Romeo and Juliet*—beginning at the end and ending at the beginning of Shakespeare's poetic development. However, the case of *Hamlet* is somewhat different from that of the other plays mentioned; the rhetorical inflation of the language of *Hamlet* lies closer to the central pre-occupations of the play than it does in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, or *The Merchant of Venice*. But at present I wish only to suggest that the amount of critical interest taken in *Hamlet* does not appear to reflect a finer quality in the poetry of the play than that in other plays. The poetry of *Hamlet* tends towards grand but vague gesture; it is doubtless very evocative, but what attitudes and feelings are evoked are amorphous In this special sense, then, Eliot's remark that the state of mind and feeling of the Prince have no adequate objective correlative is apt. Consequently the play offers itself as a standing challenge to the critic to make sense of it, to *impose* coherence and some rationale upon it. But this is only a small part of its attractiveness. The larger part is probably due to the very fact that the poetry *is* so evocative and the responses evoked so formlessly grand; to the fact, in other words, that it is very much *en rapport* with the romantic conception of poetry. Having noted this, one begins to perceive why *Hamlet* held the position it did in the nineteenth century. This was not due, I suspect, simply to the character of the Prince, as has so often been thought, but also to the peculiarly atmospheric effects of this play; initially, the

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[6] Thomas Carew, "To Ben Jonson upon occasion of his ode of defiance annext to his play of the new Inne."

'night', 'the bitter cold', the jumpiness of the guards, and the mood of the guard who anticipates the Prince in being "sick at heart." The effect produced is a portentous one, which, in preparing us for the appearance of the Ghost, seems in keeping with the plot. But this, we soon discover, is not the case, for the Ghost is itself simply another portent; it is, in the words of Bernado, a "portentous figure" which, according to Horatio, "bodes some strange eruption to our state." Shakespeare, of course, is having to keep the ball in the air; with the eruption the play will end and until then matters must somehow be suspended, the interval being whiled away with erratic incidents, verbal play, and such set speeches as Claudius' advice to Hamlet, Laertes' advice to Ophelia, Polonius' advice to Laertes, Hamlet's advice to the players, his soliloquies and ranting in Ophelia's grave.

A first impression of the play, then, is that Shakespeare is having to make a little go a long way. Consequently, the play is by Shakespearian standards unusually rhetorical, much of it being given over to verbal embellishment. Thus the Queen's response to Polonius' long-windedness, "More matter, with less art," localises for our benefit a response to the play as a whole. Much the same can be said of that exchange between Hamlet and Polonius in Act II, scene 2:

> *Pol.* . . .What do you read, my lord?
> *Ham.* Words, words, words.

Here, as in the exchange between Polonius and the Queen and in Hamlet's advice to the players, "words, words, words" become an explicit preoccupation of the play. Often it is a preoccupation with the commonplace and the platitude and with these inflated by rhetoric. The rhetoric is particularly suggestive of profundities that never materialise; something of great moment is repeatedly implied but never realized. The effect is similar in some respects to that of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," which begins,

> O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
> Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
> Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
> Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
> Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
> Who chariotest . . . & c.,

continues through twenty-one more portentous stanzas and concludes

> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

There appears to be a similar lack of realization in the poetry of *Hamlet*. Eliot has suggested that Shakespeare is attempting to bring forth something it proves beyond his power to realize.[7] This seems to me a misleading way of looking at the play; we do better, I believe, to consider what has been brought forth.

The suggestion in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" of something of greater importance than the poetry actually supplies will serve to indicate one kind of connection between *Hamlet* and the poetry of the Romantic Revival; the poetry of *Hamlet* appealed to something in the bowels of the Romantic Movement. Bradley, without pausing to explore the significance which he mentions, exclaims in his third lecture on *Hamlet*,

> How significant is the fact (if it be the fact) that it was only when the slowly rising sun of Romance began to flush the sky that the wonder, beauty and pathos of this most marvellous of Shakespeare's creations began to be visible! We do not know that they were perceived even in his own day, and perhaps those are not wholly wrong who declare that this creation, so far from being a characteristic product of the time, was a vision of the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come.[8]

And certainly Bradley's reference to "the prophetic soul . . . dreaming on things to come" contains a hint of what I have been maintaining; that the play is portentous, but that what it portends is never realised. If, then, we accept Bradley's description of the play as "a vision of the prophetic soul/Of the wide world dreaming on things to come," we might add that the dreams appear to be the

Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised . . .[9]

But setting aside speculation as to what Shakespeare may or may not have been attempting to realize in *Hamlet*, we can proceed some way towards a statement of what the play is "about" by referring to certain salient characteristics of the poetry. The poetic effect, as I've already

[7] Eliot, op cit, p. 144.

[8] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 22.

[9] Wordsworth, "Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."

mentioned, is disturbing; it relies too much upon platitude and over-elaborations of the commonplace. This observation then needs to be supplemented by remarking the peculiarly Romantic cast of the poetry, its power of suggestion, the continual implication that there is, in Hamlet's phrase, "that within which passes show," a profundity that fails to materialise.

That the poetry raises vague expectations only to frustrate them, dissolving them into rhetoric, a rhetoric which serves to sprinkle a few jaded platitudes, is what, I think, is so disturbing. But once we have formulated the matter in this way we are in a position to take a further step in an appreciation of the play. I chose the metaphor of expectations dissolving into rhetoric with which to sprinkle a few jaded platitudes in order to call to mind the situation of the Prince. For if the metaphor is an apt one to apply to the poetry of the play it is also one used in the play itself to characterise Hamlet in his first soliloquy:

> O, that this too too solid flesh would melt;
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew . . .
> Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden . . .

As the expectations aroused by the poetry dissolve into the art of freshening worldly wisdom, so Hamlet is characterised here by a desire to dissolve into a dew and so (implicitly) to freshen the "unweeded garden" of the world. To put the matter more generally, we might say that the quality of the poetry is effecting the characterisation in the play; e.g. it is Hamlet too who "raises vague expectations only to frustrate them, dissolving them into rhetoric, a rhetoric which serves to sprinkle a few jaded platitudes." How much of the Prince is composed of rhetoric, rant, verbal play and portentous utterance! But rhetoric also enters into the characterisation of Polonius, and Claudius; verbal play and portentousness further serve to define the character of Polonius, as (towards the end of the play) rant serves to define Laertes' character. In other words, the qualities of the poetry that find expression in the characterisation of the Prince also find expression in other pieces of characterisation. The characterisation of the Prince is different only in that it condenses the complete range of the play's poetic qualities, where that of, say, Polonius, Laertes, Claudius or Ophelia, only brings into play one or two of these—the rhetoric, the rant, the portentousness. These other characters, then, may be taken to represent particular symptoms in the Hamlet syndrome, a term preferable to 'pattern' as drawing attention to the fact that the poetry itself continually defines the conditions with which it deals as diseased. I can do no better here than to quote from Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's*

Imagery. The special atmosphere of *Hamlet*, she remarks,

> is partly due to the number of images of sickness, disease or blemish of the body, in the play . . . and we discover that the idea of an ulcer or tumour, as descriptive of the unwholesome condition of Denmark morally, is, on the whole, the dominating one.[10]

Miss Spurgeon's admirable summary of the major imagery in *Hamlet* serves to define more closely the general condition we meet with in the poetry of the play.

The rhetorical over-elaboration is profoundly expressive of "an unweeded garden that runs to seed," of the 'canker', the 'plurisy' that destroys by a too-rapid propagation of life—as

> goodness, growing to a plurisy,
> Dies in his own too much.

The play, in other words, glances at that over-elaboration that chokes life in waste fertility. Similarly the rant and verbal play express the 'thought-sick' and fevered condition that 'like the hectic' rages in the blood. The poetry's continual suggestion of some important but undisclosed matter takes its full significance from those numerous references throughout the play to "the foul tumour breaking inwardly and poisoning the whole body, while showing

> no cause without
> Why the man dies."[11]

The undisclosed matter that is hinted at is the hidden disease that is (in Claudius' phrase) feeding "on the pith of life."

This is a far cry from the Romantic conception of the play. Beginning with the play and not the Prince, one's attention is captured by the character and quality of the poetry of the play, detecting the preoccupation with what might be called the diarrhoea of language, characteristic not simply of the Prince but of the play.

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[10] Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 316.

[11] Spurgeon, *ibid.*

Hamlet, Duplessis-Mornay, and the "Irenic" Vision

KENNETH S. ROTHWELL

What emotions does Hamlet experience as he lies dying in the arms of Horatio at the close of the most enigmatic of tragedies? Regret for his "delay"? Pity for Ophelia? Remorse for the death of Polonius? Guilt over the hoisting of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on their own "petar"? Sorrow for Gertrude? Compassion for Laertes? Ecstasy over the demise of Claudius? Fear for himself of the unknown?

We never find out. "The rest is silence,"[1] he says just when the reader/auditor most craves details. Worst of all, Horatio's failure to report Hamlet's" . . . cause aright/To the unsatisfied"[2] has encouraged the "unsatisfied" to clog the pages of the journals with commentaries on what really happened in *Hamlet*. (Horatio was simply not up to the public-relations job thrust upon him.) Multiple warnings against the dire consequences of employing nineteenth-century "character criticism" have gone unheeded. Hamlet somehow persists in taking on a life of his own, though but a creature in a play. With all this, *Hamlet* stubbornly remains a mystery, the "Mona Lisa of literature" as T.S. Eliot said.[3]

There seems little danger that this disputation will ever cease. Quite recently two studies of *Hamlet*, each in its own way a considerable achievement, offered different opinions about the ending. Hamlet, we are told by one scholar, "died with a sense of profound weariness;"[4] while the other held the seemingly contradictory position that the prince was conscious of accepting ". . . an expression of divine will."[5] Is Hamlet a pagan or Christian? Is he the existentialist anti-hero, or a Christian warrior "saved" by a Calvinist Deity who has granted the gift of prevenient grace? Certainly those attitudes would color his inner emotions at the close of the play. My intention in writing this article is to support the Calvinist view, which is that of Robert G. Hunter in his *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments*. I take this view because it seems to me certain impulses behind *Hamlet* make this position unavoidable. Hunter, for one, does not hesitate to spell out the powerful Calvinist energies in the *Hamlet* subtext:

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[1] *Hamlet* v. ii. 358 in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). All further references are from this text.

[2] A witty exploration of Horatio's efforts to get the story straight is the late Hyam Plutzik's long narrative poem, *Horatio* (New York: Atheneum, 1961).

[3] "Hamlet and His Problems," in *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), p. 124,

[4] Walter C. Foreman, Jr., *The Music of the Close: The Final Scenes of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky, 1978), p. 105.

[5] Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1976), p. 125.

> 'Thy will be done.' Amen, *ainsi soit-il,* let be. Nothing is easier to say or harder to mean and Hamlet's ability to mean it is, for me, the final and indeed the only possible proof of what I must clumsily call his "election."[6]

In the adverb "clumsily" one suspects a trace of Socratic irony, for the idea of Hamlet as one of the elect is not put "clumsily" but adroitly, especially in the light of certain doctrines of French Protestantism Shakespeare may have known about. Admittedly the reconciliation of "the glass of fashion" (Hamlet, the madcap, the bitter jester, the youthful Jaques, the melancholy lover) with solemn puritanism may seem farfetched ("Hamlet is much more than that," people can be heard saying), but then again there is Hamlet's sartorial taste for "customary suits of solemn black." And besides there are many wings to the reformist mansion, not the least being the "irenic reunionist" emanating from France,[7] which saw its purpose as harmonizing rifts and reconciling differences among rival sects. Its adherents out of "profound sadness over the picture of Christians destroying one another"[8] stressed the similarities rather than dissimilarities among competing faiths. Hamlet, who abhorred a time "out of joint," might have felt comfortable in that church. Read from the perspective of French Calvinism, and particularly from the work of a leading advocate of that cause, Philippe du Plessis de Mornay (1549-1623),[9] the behavior of Hamlet may seem less perplexing.[10]

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] For discussion, see Jeanne Harrie, "Duplessis-Mornay, Foix-Candale, and the Hermetic Religion of the World," *RQ*, 31 (Winter 1978), 499-514.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] A detailed study of the life and works is Raoul Patry, *Philippe du Plessis-Mornay. Un Huguenot homme d'etat* (Paris: Libraire Fischbacher, 1933).

[10] Until very recently there has been little commentary on links between Shakespeare and Duplessis-Mornay, though several scholars have briefly mentioned the possibility. The fullest treatment is in Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Stoicism in *Measure for Measure*, "*RES*, 28 (Nov. 1977), 441-46, which appeared after I had begun my own

Duplessis-Mornay, or "Duplessis" as his wife referred to him in her *Memoirs*, a friend through Hubert Languet to Sir Philip Sidney, a correspondent with Michel De Montaigne, and a leading Huguenot activist (he was even dubbed their "pope"),[11] was the author, among other theological tracts and moral disquisitions, of *Excellens Traitez et discours de la vie et de la mort* (Lausanne, 1576).[12] Anyone unfamiliar with the egregious

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research on this subject. See also John W. Draper, *The Hamlet of Shakespeare's Audience* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1938), p. 197: "The conventionality . . . of Hamlet's famous soliloquy on suicide is attested by its close resemblance to a passage in the prefatory *Discourse* of de Mornay's [*sic*] *Antonius* . . ."; Hardin Craig, "Hamlet's Book," *HLB*, 6 (Nov. 1934), 22: "Montaigne repeats the same thoughts which also occur in Mornay's *Discours*"; Alice Harmon, "How Great was Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne?" *PMLA*, 57 (Dec. 1942), 1006: "De Mornay apparently adapts this same Senecan commonplace on the miseries of long life . . . in a passage in the *Excellent [sic] discours"*; William Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1966), p. 183, refers to du Plessis-Mornay's theological work, *The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion* (q.v.); H. R. D. Anders, *Shakespeare's Books* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), p. 275: "Montaigne repeats Socrates' thoughts . . . of which we also find an echo in Ph. de Mornay's Discourse of Life and Death . . ."; and T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1944), II, 604, quotes Anders as above.

[11] My information here comes from a variety of sources: Percy Addleshaw, *Sir Philip Sidney* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1909), pp. 302ff.; William A. Bradley, ed., *The Correspondence of Philip Sidney and Herbert Languet* (Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1912), *passim*. Languet's interest in Wittenberg and Philipp Melanchthon hovers on the edge of the *Hamlet* ambience; John Buxton, *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1954), pp: 92-93; *A Huguenot Family in the XVI Century* . . . written by his wife, trans. Lucy Crump (London: George Routledge & Sons, n.d.), *passim;* Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 311; *The Countess of Pembroke's Antonie*, ed. Alice Luce (Weimar: Elmar Felber, 1897), pp. 27ff.; Albert W. Osborn, *Sir Philip Sidney en France* (1932; Geneve: Slatkine Reprints, 1974), pp. 26-30; Alwin Thaler, *Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney: The Influence of the Defense of Poesy* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press 1947); Alfred H. Upham, *French Influence in English Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1911), pp. 60-61, 154; Lois Whitney, "Concerning Nature in 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," *SP*, 24 (Apr. 1927), 208-209; F.B. Young, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (London: David Nutt, 1912), pp. 53, 134-146. All however, have, or should have, obligations to *Memoires et Correspondence Duplessis-Mornay*, ed. A.D. de la Fontenelle de Vaudoré et P.R. Auguis (Paris: Iez Treutel et Wurtz, 1824), 11 vols. Volume one includes the memoir by Charlotte Arbaleste Mornay translated by Lucy Crump in *A Huguenot Family*.

[12] I have used the 1595 Geneva edition, STC 189951, Folger copy. The popularity of the work among English Protestants is attested to by the appearanc of at least three "Englished" versions: E.A. [Edward Aggas], *The Defence of Death. Contaying a most excellent discourse of life and death, written in French by Philip de Mornaye* (London 1576); the countess of Pembroke'e, see n. 14 below; and one translated by "A.W." entitled *A Christian and Godly View of Life* (London, 1593).

ways Elizabethan authors copied from the commonplaces of the ancients (and the moderns too) might wonder how a 27-year-old could compose a tract of such unrelieved lugubriousness. The *Traitez* is obsessed with death. It was of course quite typical of a popular genre that combined elements from works like Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and *Cicero's Epistles* to produce essays in moral philosophy heavily weighted with Christian-stoicism.[13] Indeed the combination of Christian and pagan thought in Duplessis' treatise marks another example of the influence on him and others of the so-called *prisci theologi*,[14] those among the ancients whose work foreshadowed doctrines of Christian revelation. The *Traitez* was translated in 1592 by Mary Sidney, countess of Pembroke,[15] sister to Duplessis' good friend, Sir Philip Sidney. Her translation, *A Discourse of Life and Death,* prefaced her edition of Robert Garnier's *Antonius*, a known analogue to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.*[16] Whatever the connection, if any, between Mary Sidney and William Shakespeare, neither the delights of her country estate at Wilton nor the blandishments of the London residence at Baynard's Castle tempted Shakespeare to abandon his romanticism for her neoclassicism. With the exception of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest,* all his work in between firmly avoided the doctrine of the "unities," so beloved by the French playwrights Mary Sidney admired.[17] Still Shakespeare was not above borrowing from the *Arcadia*[18] for *Hamlet* and there seems no reason to think that in realms other than the theatrical he would have refused to listen to her.

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[13] Others would include Girolamo Cardano's *Comforte*, Marcellus Palingenius' *Zodiacus Vitae*, La Primaudaye *French Academie*, Cawdrey's *Storehouse of Similies*, Florio's Montaigne – all books of "comfortable words." Because of the widespread use of commonplaces, or "topics," it is virtually impossible to tell when Shakespeare is borrowing from any of these authors—or none of them. This whole question of philosophical influences on Shakespeare was raised, explored, sifted, affirmed, reaffirmed, and then scrapped as irrelevant, a generation ago. For commentaries, see Hardin Craig and Alice Harmon, n. 10 above, as well as John Hankins, *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery* (1953; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1967); George Coffin Taylor, *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne* (1925; rpt. New York: Phaeton Press, 1968); and Mary O'Sullivan, "Hamlet and Dr. Timothy Bright," *PMLA*, 41 (Sept. 1926), 667-79.

[14] Harrie, p. 500.

[15] *A Discourse of Life and Death written in French by Ph. Mornay* (London, 1592). Printed by William Ponsonby, a London "bookbinder" who often served the Sidney family, the title page says "done in English by the Countess of Pembroke."

[16] Geoffrey Bullough, ed. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, V (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), 358-406: "Shakespeare probably knew the *Antonie*, and he may have taken from it a few words and images" (p. 231). Bullough used the 1595 edition of Garnier's play, which lacks the prefatory essay by Duplessis. Reuben A. Brower in "*Antony and Cleopatra:* The Heroic Context," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Antony and Cleopatra. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Rose (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977), p. 30, remarks that "Shakespeare had almost certainly read Daniels' *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, and perhaps also the Countess of Pembroke's translation of Garnier, *The Tragedie of Antonie . . ,*"

Duplessis himself, survivor of the 1572 St. Bartholomew massacre and envoy of King Henry IV of Navarre to Elizabeth I's court, must have seemed a dashing figure to the younger intelligentsia. He was a prefiguration of today's "freedom fighter," the emigre intellectual like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Christopher Marlowe dramatized him as Pleshé in *The Massacre at Paris*, and his numerous tracts were widely known. The doctrines advanced in the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (often attributed to him)[19] strongly parallel the Elizabethan concern with "deposition" in *Richard II* and with "passive obedience" as set forth in the Homilies of Elizabeth. His best known treatise, *De la Verite de la religion chrestienne* was translated in 1585 by Arthur Golding with the help and encouragement of Sir Philip Sidney.[20] It had also become fashionable for young men at the universities (maybe some of the same young men who witnessed *Hamlet*, according to the *Q*1 title page, at "the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge") to put segments of Duplessis' work into English.[21] The Prince Hamlet from Martin Luther's university at Wittenberg would have understood this enthusiasm for liberal theology from France. Calvinism, with its roots in Lutheranism, was the heady new doctrine of the "brave New World" that was to liberate the mercantile class from the landed aristocracy. There was more at stake than abstruse theological disputations.

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[17] See Alexander Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1924), p. 85. The countess' views seemed to echo her brother's as set forth in *The Defense of Poesy*. Alwin Thaler in *Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney: The Influence of The Defense of Poesy* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1947), p. 20, argues that the Prologue to *Henry V* was a Shakespearean rebuttal to Sidney's neoclassicist theories.

[18] "Analogue. *From The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, by Philip Sidney* (1590)," in Bullough, VII, 188-89.

[19] *A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants. A Translation of the Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos by Junius Brutus*, intro. Harold J. Laski (1924; rpt. Gloucester [Mass.]: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 58. Laski also summarizes the debate over attribution of this work to Duplessis. (Herbert Languet, Sidney's tutor, has also been proposed as the author.) See also Eleanor Prosser's discussion of the *Vindiciae*, which she ascribes to an "unknown author," in *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 285 ff.

[20] *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, intro. F.J. Sypher (Delmar [New York]: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1976).

[21] Arthur Golding writes in a preface to the *Trewnesse* that "not without just cause therefore hath so great loue and lyking of this worke of his bene generally conceiued; that many not onely of Gentlemen in the Court and Country, but also of Students in both the Universities, haue purposed and attempted the translating thereof . . ." (sig. *3r). See also Sypher's introductory essay on Sidney's role as translator (n. 20, above).

It is not so much the random echoes between the countess' translation of Duplessis and *Hamlet* that matter as the common interest in certain "codes." I stress "codes" because I employ the word in the Barthesian semiological sense;[22] there is no intention here, in other words, to set up an outmoded exercise in *Quellenforschung*. The question of whether or not Duplessis "influenced" Shakespeare will never be resolved, but the issue of whether or not both men employed similar codes can be demonstrated with reasonable satisfaction.

Admittedly surface details do entice the eye. Examine, for example, the interplay among "hectic," "mouse," and "wormwood." All three words turn up in other contemporary writing—"hectic" and "mouse" in the Florio Montaigne,[23] and "wormwood" in Robert Cawdrey's *A Treasure or Store-House of Similies* (London, 1600 [sig. Bbb3r]). But the odds against their appearing in the same treatise, as they do in the countess' translation, must be enormous. The Aggas translation of the *Traitez* for example gives "Mouse" but without Francisco's "stirring" (e.g., "neither may they heare a mouse run thorowe their chamber . . ." (sig. B7v). The parallels to *Hamlet* are as follows: ". . . enuie? which in truth is nought else but a feauer *Hectique* of the minde" (sig. B2v), and "Do it, England,/ For like the *hectic* in my blood he rages" (IV. iv. 65); "if the sweetnes thereof be as an infusion of *wormewood:* it is plaine enough what the displeasure is they feele, and how great the bitternes that they taste" (sig. A3v), and "*Wormwood, wormwood*" (*Fl*, 1. 2049); and, most striking, "when they lay them to sleepe you shall not heare a *mouse stur* in the chamber" (sig. B3r), and "Not a *mouse stirring*" (I.i.10).

It is also probably worth mentioning that "mouse," "wormwood," and "hectic" set up an interesting network of associations. Francisco's "not a mouse stirring" (I.i.10) on the battlements at Elsinore adumbrates the frenetic "Mouse-trap" (III.ii.237), which for Hamlet is "wormwood" (III.ii.181). Immediately afterward, Hamlet begs Gertrude not to be the "bloat" king's "mouse" (III.ii.183), and Claudius himself decides that Hamlet is a "hectic" (IV.iv.66) in his blood. Like the evil in Claudius' heart, the rodents lie deep in the castle.

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[22] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), pp. 3-16.

[23] Taylor, *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne*, pp. 6, 61. The Duplessis-Montaigne friendship shows up in *Memoires et correspondance*, see above, in several letters.

There is more, however, than verbal associations. One scene in particular, the so-called "long stretch" (II.ii.168-537), as Granville-Barker and Sir John Gielgud have labelled it, provides a good entry for showing the shared codes in the countess' *Discourse* and *Hamlet*. In this sequence, which begins at II.ii after the stage direction, *Enter Hamlet reading on a booke* (l. 168), Sir John Gielgud has felt that "the plot does not move forward at all."[24] Corroborative testimony comes from the Spanish translator of *Hamlet*, Salvador de Madariaga, when he comments on how here "Shakespeare blundered" with "matter . . . wholly extraneous to the actual business in hand."[25] If "plot" is taken in the strict sense of "story line," then of course these criticisms are just; but if taken in a wider, Barthesian sense as a contribution to the "multiple signifiers" making up the text, then the scene goes beyond mere excrescence. It instead makes up, to steal terminology from film studies, "an establishing shot" for creating the image of Hamlet as wit and philosopher. The transformation of Amleth, avenger, into Hamlet, thinker, as many have pointed out,[26] demanded codes extraneous to the revenge-play school. The sequence, which terminates with "O what a rogue and peasant slave . . . ," is a systematic digression acting as metonymy for much of the rest of the play. In its own way it becomes one of the compound subjects whose predicate ultimately must be the death of Hamlet.

What happens in these 369 lines? Actually they can be subdivided into eight segments, each of which probably could be read, in the current fashion for "metatheatrics," as an internal play, or minidrama, commenting on, or mirroring, the play's major design. (As Alvin B. Kernan and others have noted, "[*Hamlet*] contains few scenes that are not slightly disguised forms of a play-within-a-play."[27] But Shakespeare and his contemporaries, even the divines, were so steeped in the trope of "all the

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[34] Rosamond Gilder, *John Gielgud's Hamlet. A Record of Performance* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 52.

[25] *On Hamlet* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1948), p. 108.

[26] See, for example, Gilbert Murray, *The Classical Tradition in Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927), p. 208; T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in *Collected Essays*, p. 122; C.M. Lewis, *The Genesis of* Hamlet (1907; rpt. Folcroft [Pa.]: Folcroft Press, 1969), pp. 128ff.

[27] *The Playwright as Magician* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 102. For other analyses from this fashionable "metatheatric" approach, see also J.L. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971); Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962); and Wendy Sanford, *Theater as Metaphor in Hamlet* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967). One of the most incisive statements is that by Lionel Abel, "Hamlet Q.E.D." in *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963).

world's a stage" that it bordered on cliche.) In the eight subdivisions, Hamlet plays many roles: (1) baiting Polonius, ll. 170-221; (2) bantering with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, ll. 222-69; (3) accusing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of being spies, ll. 270-314; (4) discussing current fashions in the play-houses of the city, ll. 315-79; (5) verbally fencing with Polonius when he returns to announce the arrival of the players, ll. 380-420; (6) welcoming the players to Elsinore, ll. 421-50; (7) speaking lines from *Dido* with the First Player, while Polonius functions as a drama critic, ll. 451-521; (8) acting as playwright by inserting lines into the "Murder of Gonzago," ll. 522-49. And closing the scene is the meditation beginning "O what a rogue and peasant slave . . ." ll. 550-605. This incredibly nimble prince has in turn functioned as satirist, philosopher, detective, drama critic, stage director, playwright, spectator, and, last of all, the introspective thinker.

The scene offers a galaxy of the personality traits in the man who is "the observed of observers": a kind of embittered Romeo, a witty Feste-like fool, a sly Prince Hal, a manipulative Iago, a cunning Richard Gloucester, with perhaps even a touch of the Escalus who is a "Duke of dark corners." Peculiarly insistent, however, is the preoccupation with death, a major theme in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, or, as C.S. Lewis puts it, fear of the act of "being dead."[28] For it is precisely in this conquering of the fear of death that Hamlet's triumph as a tragic hero takes place. His *arete*[29] lies in this ability to convert the dread of something hereafter into the vision of eternal life. Exactly when that "regeneration"[30] takes place is hard to tell: whether on the abortive trip to England, in the jocular exchange with the gravediggers, the leaping into and out of Ophelia's grave (prime material for archetypal critics), or in the forgiving of Laertes. It is even possible, though disastrous perhaps for *Hamlet* as a formal tragedy, that like Prince Hal, Hamlet is really the same person at the beginning as at the end of the play. In this view, which I think represents Professor Tillyard's,[31] *Hamlet* ceases to be a

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[28] "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" Annual Shakespeare Lecture of the British Academy, 1942 (From *Proceedings*, XXVIII, 11).

[29] Peter Alexander, *Hamlet Father and Son* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 115 and passim. Alexander, using Olivier's filmed Hamlet as a springboard, argues that *arete* is of greater consequence to the tragic hero than *hamartia*. The stress in the Olivier film on "flaw" distorts Hamlet's character.

[30] S.F. Johnson, "The Regeneration of Hamlet," *SQ*, 3 (July 1952), 187-207 offers a fine summary of views about Hamlet's "change" in character. Johnson himself concludes that Hamlet is "in Act I . . . a student prince; in Act V . . . the ordained minister of providence" (p. 206).

[31] *Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), p. 31.

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tragedy and becomes a problem play. My general impression, though, is that the prince of the last act is different from the earlier Hamlet, and I think most critics would agree with that position. But to make the Hamlet who can say "the readiness is all" plausible, Shakespeare needed to plant the seeds for his conversion along the way.

At this stage the *Discourse* and *Hamlet* converge with their common codes of Christianized stoicism, the Calvinist doctrine of the inevitability of God's will, the sense of "voluntarism," and, most importantly for Hamlet, the "irenicist" tendency, typical of the Huguenots, for discovering harmony within conflict. The philosophical basis lies, as Joseph E. Baker cogently pointed out long ago, in the status of *Hamlet* as a play which deals with the "opposition between external phenomenon and invisible reality."[32] Surface events mean less than what they represent or stand for. Hamlet's "truth" may well seem foolish in the eyes of the world, just as Polonius', or Claudius', "truth" may seem foolish in the eyes of God. (The pervasive debt to Pauline doctrine is yet another touchstone of this Calvinist faith.) Hamlet in his simple adherence, as Baker points out,[33] to truth as defined in the world above is bound to look insane in the eyes of the world below. Hamlet's apparently baffling behavior rests on the assumption of Duplessis (as well as Montaigne) that *mourir pour vivre, & vivre pour mourir* (*Excellens Traitez*, sig. f8^v). Indeed the title page of the 1595 Lausanne edition, in a striking *memento mori*, shows the hand of God holding a Janus-like head with a face on one side and a skull on the other. Hamlet's musings with the skull of Yorick in the graveyard come to mind. Death and life are never far apart in that gothic world. But in the "irenicist" frame of mind life and death become not dualities but ultimately and transcendentally One.

Throughout the *Discourse*, which like other contemporary treatises on moral philosophy, served as "remedies for all calamities" (Cardanus *Comforte* [sig. I1[^{r}]), there is a lugubrious tone, consistent with the texture of *Hamlet*, e.g., "the worlde is so full of euilles, that to write them all, woulde require an other worlde as great as it selfe" (sig. D1^v). Despite the gloomy prognosis for life on earth, a persistent belief in salvation through faith stamps Duplessis as a true Calvinist. Augustinian notions of depravity, consistent with Hamlet's feelings about the fallen creatures at the court, proliferate. There is a sense of the interplay between shadow and substance, imaginary and "real," illusion and reality, also characteristic of *Hamlet*. As Duplessis writes, "We looke but through false spectacles: we haue eyes but ouergrowne with pearles: we think we see, but it is in a dreame . . ." (sig. D4^{r}). Compare this with Hamlet's "Seems, madam? nay, it is. I know not 'seems' " (I.ii.76), and in II.ii while talking with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's remarks about "bad dreams" (II.ii.256).

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[32] "The Philosophy of Hamlet," in *Essays in Dramatic Literature. The Parrot Presentation Volume*, ed. Hardin Craig (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1935) p. 462.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

The many specific parallels between II.ii. and the Countess of Pembroke's *D'scourse on Life and Death* would in the world of early twentieth-century scholarship have been declared *prima facie* evidence of "influence," not merely coincidence. There is some evidence that the wording of the Sidney translation is more detectable than that of the Aggas, for example, in *Hamlet*. Today's methodology demands, however, that parallels speak for themselves, without irritable reaching out after conclusions by the investigator.

Almost at once Hamlet's casual banter with Polonius about "honesty" touches a chord: ". . . to be honest as this world goes, is to be one man pick'd out of ten thousand" (II.ii.178) seems very much like the *Discourse's:* "we retire vs (so say we) from the wicked: but cary with vs our aurice, our ambition . . . all our corrupt affections" (sig. C3^{v}).

Hamlet continues his satirical attack on Polonius, after the cryptic remarks about "good-kissing carrion." The physically revolting details of old age are, as is well known, one of the "topics"; Hamlet's and those in the *Discourse* are not far apart: "old men have grey beards . . . their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum" (II.ii.197ff.). Compare that with Duplessis' observation that "you are payed for the excesse and riotousness of youth, with gout, palsies . . . losse of sight, losse of hearing . . ." (sig. D1^{r}). The topic of old age, however, then justifies a common moral in both works. Hamlet's riddling comment "for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward" is explained by Duplessis' "[old age is] contrariwise . . . nothing but an after taste of all the fore going euills" (sig. C4^{v}) of the previous ages of man. In short, starting from opposite ends the weaknesses of youth and old age meet.

Does any of this concern with the similarities of youth and age hint that Hamlet and Polonius may not have been so far apart in temperament as we generally suppose? After all, each was "Ophelia's man," and women have been known to seek out men who resemble their fathers. If so, it is yet another irony in the complicated domestic affairs at Elsinore.

The entry a few lines later of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern provides the most exciting link between Shakespeare and Duplessis. Some thirty-one lines (II.ii.238-269) are one of the six lengthier passages found in Fl but not in Q2.[34] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who in the analogue to Hamlet, *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, were mere mutes, scornfully described by the king as ". . . the lackeys? A pair of fine fellows!" (III.x.),[35] are metamorphosed into experienced courtiers. References to "fortune," "prisons," "dungeons," "dreams," "shadows," and "honesty" trigger associations with Plato's vision of the world as a prison house fettering men's souls. But the exact sequence of the dialogue, as we shall see, follows the *Discourse* with noticeable fidelity. Indeed the brief scene resembles a symposium with Hamlet playing the *eiron* to his school fellows' *alazones*. For some reason the compilers of the Folio thought it worthwhile to restore this set-piece to the text. Could it have been out of deference to the Countess of Pembroke, mother of "the most noble and incomparable pair of brethren," the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, to whom Heminges and Condell dedicated the Folio? If Shakespeare fleshed out the shadowy figures in *Der bestrafte Brudermord* with concepts found in the countess' *Discourse*, that debt would not have gone unnoticed by the two sons who had so recently lost their talented mother in 1621. There may have been political as well as literary considerations for inserting this in the Folio.

In the corrupt Q1 version of the scene, Hamlet goes directly to the point: "Is this visitation free of/ Yourseulves, or were you not sent for?" The men imprisoned in the flesh are perfect for Denmark, which according to Hamlet a few lines later is a "prison." And as courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suit Duplessis' description of that class of men: "lastly, will you knowe that the diuersitie is betwene the most hardly intreated prisoners and them? both are *inchained*, both *loaden* with fetters . . . . The prisoner drawes his fetters after him, the courtier weareth his vpon him" (sig. B3^v).

Likewise the effusive greetings of the young courtiers (My honor'd lord!" and "My most dear lord!") earn a cutting reply from Hamlet: in F1 "my excellent good friends?" which as a question is more sarcastic that Q2's "extent good friends." Like Hamlet, Duplessis knows a hawk from a handsaw, and a false from a real friend: "These blind courtiers make themselues beleeue, that they haue freends, and many that honor them: neuer considering that as they make semblance to loue . . . so others do by them. Their superiors disdaine them, and neuer but with scorne do so much as salute them . . ." (sig. B2^v).

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[34] See Harold Jenkins, "Playhouse Interpolations in the Folio Text of *Hamlet*," *SB*, 13 (1960), 32-47. See also John Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and the Problems of its Transmission*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1934).

[35] Bullough, VII, 148.

Earlier in the scene Guildenstern had added to the mindless complacency with his "Happy, in that we are not [over-] happy, on Fortune's [cap] we are not the very button." In Q2 the word "lap" appears for the "cap" of *F1*. Editors, who dismiss "lap" as a corruption, can find support in the *Discourse*. "I speake not heere of the wretchedness of them, who all their life haue held out their *cap* to receiue the almes of court fortune" (sig. C1^{v}). Shakespeare has made the "courtier's cap" "fortune's cap" but the closeness suggests a half recollected phrase.

Hamlet's inquiry of his Wittenberg school fellows as to whether or not they "live about [fortune's] waist" brings out more coincidences. In the *Discourse:* "They [courtiers] are faire built *prisons*, full within of deepe ditches, and *dungeons*" (sig. B3^{r}), and in *Hamlet:* "What have you, my good friends, deserv'd at the hands of *Fortune*, that she sends you to *prison* hither? . . . Denmark's a *prison* . . . A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and *dungeons*." In the *Discourse:* "Now as sicke as he, and many times more sicke, who *thinkes* himself so, then who in deed is" (sig. B3^{r}), in *Hamlet:* ". . . for there is nothing either good or bad, but *thinking* makes it so. To me it is a *prison*." The closing remarks in this same section touch on the poisoning motif: ". . . and euen those whome they haue chosen for their guard, they distrust . . . They drinke in gould and siluer; but in those, not in earth or glasse, is *poison* prepared and dronke . . ." (sig. B3^{r}). On the ambitions of courtiers, we also find this analogue. In the *Discourse:* "dayly they are aspiring higher, and neuer where they would be. Some one sets downe a *bound* in his minde" (sig. B3^{v}), and in *Hamlet* Rosencrantz says "why then your ambition makes it one. 'Tis too narrow for your mind," and Hamlet replies, "O God, I could be *bounded* in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space . . . ."

(Later on, though not in this scene, Rosencrantz is compared by Hamlet to a "sponge" [IV.ii.12ff]. "When he [the king] needs what you have glean'd, it is but squeezing you, and, spunge, you shall be dry again [IV.ii.12ff.]. There is a similarity again to the *Discourse*, which reads: "when he [a prince] hath filled him with all wealth, he wrings him after as a sponge" [sig. B2^{v}.].)

Would it be accurate, then, to say that II.ii, "the long stretch," acts as a staging area for the deployment of the "new" Hamlet? Its deeper concerns are with a philosophical dualism manifested in stoic references to the "prison house" of the world below as compared to the freedom of the world above. Quibbles, puns, wordplay here (and elsewhere) are not only verbal fencing prefiguring the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes,[36] but also signifiers of the ambiguity of truth. In this atmosphere, Hamlet can be prepared for his ultimate transcendence over the fallen world of courtiers.

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[36] See Foreman, *Music of the Close*, pp. 75ff. for an interesting development of the fencing trope in *Hamlet* as a complement to the theatrical images.

Hamlet's is both an inward and outward journey. On the inward journey he meditates in soliloquy about the vicissitudes of life and fate; on the outward journey, like a morality-play figure, he passes many stations along the way. They include meetings with the father's Ghost, Ophelia, Claudius, Polonius, Gertrude, observance of Fortinbras as well as "The Mouse-trap," abortive trip to England, and symbolic leap into the grave with Laertes. Somewhere on those journeys, as I have previously said, Hamlet undergoes a change in perception of truth, or, at least, a coming to terms with his own destiny. With the important exceptions of E.M.W. Tillyard and A.C. Bradley,[37] the reality of this metamorphosis keeps coming up in the commentaries. Thus John Gielgud mentions that he [Hamlet] ". . . is extremely difficult to reconcile with the violent and often more showy passages in the earlier scenes";[38] Joan Rees refers to "the new tone in which Hamlet speaks to Laertes" after the graveyard scene;[39] and Maurice Charney observes that "before the sea voyage Hamlet was at a standstill; now he moves with a new sureness."[40]

This "new sureness" makes the jarring news that he is thirty years old seem almost a Freudian slip. Compared to "the student prince" of the earlier part of the play, he is now a mature scholar. Everything he says—the way he speaks to Laertes, to Horatio, to Osric—suggests a new person, who has indeed "let be." And again in these closing sections of the play, there are similarities to the broad outlines of Duplessis' treatise.

Horatio, for example, is the very anti-type to the base courtiers dismissed by Duplessis as treacherous to society. Unlike the deceitful Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Horatio as a man who is "not passion's slave" (III.ii.73) could satisfy the formula advocated by Duplessis: "But may there not be some, who supplying the place of Iustice, or beeing neere about a Prince, may without following such unbridled passions, pleasantly enjoy their goodes, ioyning honor with rest and contentment of mind?" (sig. C1^{v}).

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[37] *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1970; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1962), p. 120. Bradley detects no "material change in his [Hamlet's] general condition." While admitting that Hamlet now appears to be "in the hands of Providence," Bradley feels the attitude stems from slackness or indifference rather than from a joyous acceptance of a new role.

[38] Gilder, p. 52.

[39] *Shakespeare and the Story* (London: Univ. of London Athlone Press, 1978), p. 191.

[40] "Reading *Hamlet:* Text, Context, and Subtext," in *How to Read Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Edward Quinn (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 130.

Hamlet's inner conflict with "conscience," which is the central dilemma of the play in many respects, also has significant parallels in the *Discourse*. (The "To be or not to be . . ." soliloquy in its concern with death also resembles Escalus' speech in *Measure for Measure* which has been seen by Katherine Duncan-Jones as influenced by Duplessis.)[41] The treatise makes plain that doubt about right action is not moral cowardice but rather the way any rational man would view a worldly dilemma. Hamlet is the modern man, decent in instinct, who, drafted into warfare, makes the best of a wretched situation. To illustrate these connections, may I be permitted an exercise in parallel passages?

The *Discourse* tells us: "Tell mee, what is it selfe *to bee* dead, but *to bee* no more liuing in the worlde? Absolutelie and simplie *not to bee* in the world, is it anie payne?" (sig. D2^{v}), while Hamlet meditates, "*To be*, or *not to bee*"; the *Discourse*: "Let but *fortune* turne her back, every man turnes from them" (sig. B2^{v}), while in *Hamlet* we have: "to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous *fortune*"; the *Discourse*:: "This life is but a Penelopes web, wherein we are alwayes doing and vndoing: a *sea* open to all windes, which . . . neuer cease to torment vs" (sig. A2^{r}), and in *Hamlet*: "or to take arms against a *sea* of troubles / And by opposing, end them"; the *Discourse*: " . . . how at last can we escape? . . . One only meane there is, which is *death*" (sig. C3^{v}), and in *Hamlet*: "to *die*, to sleep— / No more, and by a sleep to say we end . . ."; the *Discourse:* "can get nothing, often with incredible *heartgriefe*" (sig. C1^{v}), and *Hamlet:* "The *heart-ache* . . ."; the *Discourse:* "His [Hercules] passions entertains him with a *thousand* delights, prepares him for a *thousand* baites, presents him with a *thousand* worldly pleasures . . . (sig. A3^{v}), and *Hamlet:* "and the *thousand* natural shocks / That flesh is heir to . . ."; the *Discourse:* "I will not heere speake of the displeasures confessed by all, as quarells, debates, woundes, murthers, banishments, sicknes, perils, whereinto sometimes the *insolencie* of this ill guided age conductes him . . ." (sig. A3^{v}), and *Hamlet:* "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, / Th' oppressors's wrong, the proud man's contumely, / The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay, / The *insolence* of office . . ."; the *Discourse:* "Consider all the periods of this life. We enter it in teares, passe it in *sweate*, we end it in sorowe" (sig. A3^{r}), and "Loe him that stoutly hath made resistance: he feeles himselfe *weery* . . ." (sig. A4^{r}), and "the attaining of all these deceiuable goods is nothing else but *weeriness* of body, and . . . weerines of the mind" (sig. B1^{r}), and in *Hamlet:* "To grunt and sweat under a *weary* life"; the *Discourse:* "what euill is there in *death*, that we should so much eschue it? Nay what euill is there not in life?" (sig. A3^{r}), and in *Hamlet:* "But that the dread of something after *death*"; the *Discourse:* "For I pray what can he feare, whose death is his hope? Thinke we to banish him his *country*? He knows he hath a *country* other-where, whence wee cannot banish him: and that all these *countries* are but Innes, out of which he must part at the wil of his hoste" (sig. E1^{v}), and in *Hamlet:* "The undiscover'd *country* from whose bourn / No traveller returns, puzzles the will . . ."; the *Discourse:* "Neyther ought we to *flye* death, for it is childish to feare it: and in *flieng* from it, wee meete it" (sig. E2^{v}), and in *Hamlet:* "And makes us rather bear those ills we have,/Than *fly* to others that we know not of," the *Discourse:* "whereby their *conscience* is filled with perpetuall remorse which neuer leaves them in quiet . . ." (sig. B1^{v}), and in *Hamlet*: "Thus *conscience* does make cowards of us all"; the *Discourse*: "What must we then doe in so great a contrarietie and confusion of minds? Must wee to fynde true humanitie, *flye* the societie of man, and hide vs in forrestes among wilde beastes?" (sig. C2^{r}), and in *Hamlet*: "And thus the native hue of resolution/Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,/And enterprises of great pitch and moment/With this regard their currents turn awry,/And lose the name of action."

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[41] See n. 10, above.

Almost, but not quite, every concept in the soliloquy appears in the *Discourse*. In Duplessis' mind, "to be" and "not to be" clearly imply life and death, though in the *Trewnesse of Christian Religion*, which Shakespeare may also have known, he carries the Aristotelian idea of "being" and "non-being" to a metaphysical level: "It remaineth then that Not-beeing . . . [was] afore Beeing."[42] The idea of fortune buffeting mankind, at least as old as Seneca, is there, as well as the metaphor of the "sea," another commonplace, which Martin Luther among others exploits.[43] In the full context of the "sea" metaphor, Hamlet does not plan to take arms against the sea so much as the troubles found on it during life's voyage. Hamlet's musings about suicide receive sharp answers in the *Discourse* with advice that "the Christian ought willingly to depart out of this life but not cowardly to runne away" (sig. E2^{v}). His arguments with himself about the nature of the after life simply repeat Platonic reasons for not fearing death, well rehearsed both in the *Discourse* and almost everywhere else.

The similarity between "heartache" and "heartgriefe" is striking. Both Duplessis and Hamlet acknowledge the pitiable condition of the non-elect who must endure the "weariness" of life, the "insolence" of the times, and reflect on whether it is better to remain here or "fly" elsewhere. Duplessis uses "conscience" in the sense of "awareness of right or wrong," while Hamlet, at least according to Onions' *Glossary*, gives it the sense of "knowledge" or "conviction." One suspects here, though, a multiple sense in the word's meaning, entirely typical of Shakespearean practice. In this reading, "full awareness of the whole condition of man" is the meaning of "conscience."

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[42] in The *Prose Works*, III, ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962), 206.

[43] "Preface to Psalms," in *Martin Luther. Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor-Doubleday Books, 1961), p. 39.

As the drama unfolds, Hamlet has a moment to compare himself with Fortinbras, who, like Laertes, seems in some ways, as the Fl text adds, "by the image of [his] cause . . . / The portraiture of [Hamlet's]" (V.ii.77). His "How all occasions do inform against me . . ." (IV.iv.3ff.) shares the contempt for pride and ambition found in Duplessis. In the *Discourse:* ". . . at the pleasure of a *Prince*, that more regards a hundred perches of ground on his neighbours frontiers, then the liues of a hundred thousand such as he . . . foolish to thinke himself in honor with him, that makes so little reckening to loose him for a thing of no worth" (sig. B2^r), and in *Hamlet:* "Witness this army of such mass and charge,/Led by a delicate and tender *prince*,/Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd/Makes mouths at the invisible event,/Exposing what is mortal and unsure/To all that fortune, death, and danger dare." In the *Discourse:* "You deeme them great . . . But could you enter into their mindes, you would iudge that neither they are *great*, true *greatnes* consisting in contempt of those vaine *greatnesses*, whereunto they are slaues" (sig. B3^v), and in *Hamlet:* "Rightly to be *great*/Is not to stir without *great* argument,/But *greatly* to find quarrel in a straw/When honor's at the stake."

As might be expected by now, Hamlet's single most important dramatic utterance, his moment of *anagnorisis*, has its equivalent in Duplessis' tract. To Horatio, he confides that he has resolved the dilemma of whether "to be or not to be":

> Not a whit, we defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be [now], 'tis not to come; if it be not to come it will be now; if it be not now; yet it [will] come—the readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is't to leave betimes, let be (V.ii.219).

Hamlet has decided neither "to be" nor "not to be" but simply to "let be"—to accept. The spiritual anguish, as the romantics saw it, or the powerfully logical thought processes of a genius, as rationalists might see it,[44] has been resolved. The abandonment of mortal wrestling with free choice has quieted the "perturbed spirit" that now accepts the doctrine of election through grace. (The word "election" comes up, though in quite a different context, when Hamlet says, "th' election lights/On Fortinbras" (V.ii.355). Fortinbras will carry on, however, with the advantage of starting where Hamlet ended, in full control of his position).

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[44] For discussion of the interplay between reason and intuition in Hamlet's thinking, see Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971),

Hamlet's "fall of a sparrow" utterance has the usual analogues in the writings of the *prisci theologi,* those pagans whose thoughts were suitable for Christianizing. There is also something very similar said in Matt. 25: "Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour . . . ." In the *Discourse,* the acceptance of providential design emerges in this fashion: "God calleth home from his worke, one in the morning; an other at noone, and an other at night . . . euery one in his time. Who leaues his work before God call him, looses it: and who importunes him before the time, looses his reward. We must rest in his will, who in the middest of our troubles sets vs at rest" (sig. E2^{v}).

Perhaps Hamlet has his own frustrated search for serenity of spirit in mind in picking "felicity" as the word to use when exhorting Horatio to carry on as his advocate: ". . . absent thee from felicity a while,/And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain" (V.ii.347). That concept also appears in the *Discourse:* ". . . the keeping it selfe of the greatest *felicitie* in this worlde, is full of vnhappinesse and *infelicitie*" (sig. D1^{v}). Hamlet's view of this world as "harsh" and the next as "felicitous" coincides with Duplessis' belief that "all that we haue, and all that we know is but abuse and vanitie. Death only can restore vs both life and light" (sig. D4^{r}). In death Hamlet finds that "light" which Claudius and Polonius crying out for "light" ("Give me some light," and "Lights, lights, lights!" [III.ii.269]) cannot find in life. As Duplessis wrote in the *Trewnesse of the Christian Religion* ". . . in the very Soule of man, the evil that is there is a kind of darknesse, for want of looking up to ye light of the sovereyne mynde which should inlighten it."[45] Even Hamlet's last word, "silence," echoes another statement in the *Trewnesse:* "And therefore we must with *Trismegistus* call upon him [Divine Providence] in *silence*; and say unto him with *David*, Lord, the best prayse that I can give unto thee is *silence*."[46]

To return to the question raised at the beginning of this paper, how has a scrutiny of the Countess of Pembroke's translation of Duplessis' *Traitez* helped to shed light on the emotions of a dying Hamlet? If

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pp. 1-71. "True reality must be achieved in a 'higher' way, by contemplation and intuition" (p. 23). This seems to me to be exactly Hamlet's path, consistent with his role as intellectual and mystic.

[45] Sidney, *Prose*, III, 231.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

Hamlet's conversion experience, or his reawakening of latent instincts, followed Calvinist doctrine, he did not at all, like a Dylan Thomas, "rage against the dying of the light." Accepting his role as "scourge and minister,"[47] he entered into the world of light, not darkness. He was indeed, as Horatio said, a "sweet" not a "bitter" prince, though the adjective "sweet" need not carry saccharin implications. The protestants in the audience[48] might have glimpsed traces of the "irenicism" particularly valued by the Huguenots. The search for harmony amidst dissension represented a noble goal, which achieved a *reductio ad absurdum* when Henry of Navarre's tolerance allowed him to utter the celebrated quip that "Paris was well worth a Mass."

As Susan Snyder has pointed out, Hamlet may well have been ". . . eiron as well as alazon in a situation that demands the single-minded alazon response."[49] One might think that a young man who had been so thoroughly victimized by usurpation would respond with greater animosity. But Laertes gives an example of what happens to young men of that temperament, and we are reminded again that Hamlet is Hamlet, not Laertes. The vocabulary Professor Snyder uses is drawn from the drama criticism of the ancients, not the theology of the Reformation. In other words, Hamlet's ambivalence, his procrastination, may be in the eye of the beholder, particularly those beholders who dwell in the fallen world Harold Goddard said, I think, much the same thing when he argued tha Hamlet had no "sacred duty" to exact personal vengeance for the murder of his father.[50]

These are thorny questions. In the wide gap in time between the Elizabethan and modern world, distorted portraits of Hamlet as a neurotic, a mere procrastinator, an overly delicate creature, or perhaps, only a creature in a play, have been inevitable. Hence there is something to be said for now and then connecting Prince Hamlet with the intellectual fashions of his times. John Hankins put the case well when he asked, "Is there some element in *Hamlet* so familiar to its contemporaries as not to require explanation, but one which is largely lost upon readers and audience now?"[51] The countess' translation of Duplessis with its profoundly syncretic intertwining of pagan and Christian elements may not be the exact answer to this question but it can nudge us closer to the heart of the mystery. And it may even help, given the failure of Horatio to make things plain, to explain how Hamlet felt during those last fleeting moments.[52]

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[47] This phrase from *Hamlet* has been discussed by G.R. Elliott, *Scourge and Minister* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1951); and Fredson Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," in *Twentieth Century Interpretation of* Hamlet, *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. David Bevington (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 82-92; for a rebuttal of the latter article, see R.W. Dent, "Hamlet: Scourge and Minister," *SQ*, 29 (Winter 1978), 82-84.

[48] Shakespeare's residency in Cripplegate with the Mountjoy family, tire makers (E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare. A Study of Facts and Problems* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930], I, 85), and his general relationship with the French exiles in Blackfriars is an intriguing one. So far as I have been able to tell, Duplessis never resided in Blackfriars, though. See. J.C. Whitebook, "Huguenots of Blackfriars and Its Neighborhood in Shakespearean Days," *N&Q*, 181 (Oct. 25, 1941), 226-28; (Nov. 1, 1941), 242-43; (Nov. 8, 1941), 254-56.

[49] *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), p. 94.

[50] *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 334.

[51] *The Character of Hamlet* (1941; rpt. Freeport [N.Y.]: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), p. 5.

[52] I wish to express my gratitude to the Department of English and College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Vermont for a sabbatical leave to carry out this research, and to the Graduate College for a grant-in-aid to study at the Folger Library.

The Language of Voice, Expression, and Gesture in *Hamlet*

JANE L. DONAWERTH

It is a commonplace that in *Hamlet*, as in much of Renaissance drama, styles of language help to create the characters, to keep the plot moving in debate, and to shape the imagined world of the play on a stage without scenery.[1] This essay will explore a related aspect of Shakespeare's dramaturgy: the dramatic effect of ideas about language. In *Hamlet* ideas about language, like styles of language, help to particularize characters, to define an imagined world, and to structure the story. The abundance of ideas drawn from medical theory, rhetoric, and the arts of poetry and acting, reminds us that Shakespeare followed his age in its taste for amplitude of expression. In a text-book Shakespeare might have studied in school, Erasmus advises that a multitude of ideas as well as words, *copia rerum et verborum*, should go into a speech. One should judge what to use by the standard of appropriateness: different ages, different types of people, even individuals of the same type, favor different words *and ideas*.[2] In his mature plays, Shakespeare's use of linguistic ideas reflects these Renaissance guides to composition: copiousness and decorum. Just as he varies styles of language from one play to another, and from one character to another, so he varies ideas about language. The variation in both cases helps to make characters distinctive and to give the societies dramatic form. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare demonstrates his mastery over this aspect of his medium: men and women define themselves by their attitudes toward language; if not in words, then in the alternative language of voice and gesture, they reveal their inner, emotional life; and from the conflicting ideas and attitudes of the characters emerges a tragically mutable world. Ideas about language further mark the stages by which Hamlet comes to terms with his world and the nature of the task, in the light of events thrust upon him.

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[1] On the importance of style of language to *Hamlet*, see, for example, Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959); and Madeleine Doran, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Language* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 33-62.

[2] Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, tr. Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 15-16, and p. 52.

Renaissance grammarians generally understood language as a two-part system of voiced sounds and significant symbols: speech is both air struck by the tongue and reverberated in the ears, and also an ordered sequence of rational signs.[3] But other Renaissance thinkers concentrated on parts of the system, depending on what they wanted language to do. Medical writers studied voice as a purge of the humours that collect around the heart during passion or disease. Combining voice with gesture, rhetoricians regarded delivery as a language of emotions especially appealing to the vulgar. Painters argued that their pictures spoke, though dumb, because they captured the affections of mankind in their actions. Asserting that their art surpassed oratory and painting, actors contended that their voice, expression, and gesture not only communicated the passions, but also moved men to virtuous deeds. In Shakespeare's age, men studied the symbolic part of language in as many ways as this natural, physical part. But it is this physical language of voice and gesture that receives emphasis in *Hamlet*.

Like imagery or allusion, ideas about language tell us what kind of people inhabit the world of *Hamlet*, and what regulations and forms of society obtain. Speech is not a social bond in the first two acts of *Hamlet*. The men and women of Shakespeare's Denmark are singularly reluctant to speak. On the subject of the ghost, Hamlet commands the guards, "Let it be tenable in your silence still,/. . . Give it an understanding but no tongue" (I.2.247-9).[4] Polonius warns Ophelia not "to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet" (1.3.134). At first, only the "whisper" (1.1.80) goes about to tell the rumours of Fortinbras' invasion; and when the invasion is openly discussed at court, the cause appears to be that Norway, "impotent and bedred, scarcely hears/Of this his nephew's purpose" (1.2.29-30).

Meaning in Hamlet's world is not straightforward, but hidden in the biases and indirections of thought. Polonius sends Reynaldo to slander his son, naively directing him to "breathe his faults . . . quaintly" (2.1.31)

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[3] These definitions of voice, words, and speech originate with the medieval grammarians Donatus and Priscian. See Wayland J. Chase's introduction to *The Ars Minor of Donatus*, Univ. of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 11 (Madison, 1926), pp. 16-23; and G.A. Padley, *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 15-29.

[4] *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974). All references to *Hamlet* will be to this edition.

—to insinuate rather than to accuse. The ghost tells Hamlet that "the whole ear of Denmark/Is by a forged process of my death/Rankly abus'd" (1.5.36-8). It is no accident in this world that Polonius begins his advice to his son with the maxim, "Give thy thoughts no tongue" (1.3.59), and reinforces it with another proverb: "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice" (1.68).

Throughout the first two acts, characters reveal an automatic distrust of words that speaks their distrust of each other.[5] Laertes admonishes Ophelia to discount Hamlet's offers of love:

> Then if he says he loves you,
> It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
> As he in his particular act and place
> May give his saying deed, which is no further
> Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
>
> (1.3.24-8)

With a chilling casualness, Laertes instructs his sister to expect deceit: that the Prince must be lying, even if he does not mean to, is to be expected. Yet more distrustful is Polonius: "Do not believe his vows, fo they are brokers,/ . . . Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,/Th better to beguile" (1.3.127-31). To be sure, Laertes and Polonius judg by their own standards; "I do know," urges Polonius,/"When the bloo burns, how prodigal the soul/Lends the tongue vows" (1.3.115-17). But in this society, even those with higher standards assume that men often have motives in opposition to their words. Owing to his skepticism, Horatio's "ears . . . are . . . fortified" against [the guards] "story" of the ghost (1.1.31-2). And Hamlet politely denies his friend's joke about truancy from Wittenberg: "Nor shall you do my ear that violence/To make it truster of your own report/Against yourself" (1.2.171-3). Were language no more than a system of untrustworthy signs in the Denmark of *Hamlet*, communication would seem scarcely possible.

From the Renaissance viewpoint, however, language is not only symbols denoting facts and truths, but also voice, expression, and gesture, conveying and purging the passions. According to Sir Francis Bacon, this side of language communicates character and emotion: "The Lineaments of the body do disclose the disposition and inclination of the mind in general; but the motions of the countenance and parts do not only so, but further disclose the present humour and state of the mind and will."[6] It is this side of language, what Thomas Wilson called "the speache of [man's] bodie," and Montaigne, "the proper and peculier speech of humane nature,"[7] that receives emphasis in the first two acts of *Hamlet*.

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[5] This point has been made before. See, for example, H.B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1949), p. 111; Maynard Mack, Sr., "The World of Hamlet," *YR*, 41 (1952), 505-7; and Robert Hapgood, "*Hamlet* Nearly Absurd," *TDR*, 9 (Summer, 1965), 139.

The ghost, silent at first, yet speaks through expression and gesture, his "countenance more/In sorrow than in anger" (1.2.231-2), his "courteous action" (1.4.60) waving Hamlet to follow. Because they prefigure some monstrous disorder in the world, ghosts do not address men in ordinary, rational discourse. Horatio compares this ghost to "the sheeted dead," omens of Julius Caesar's death, who "Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets" (1.1.115-16). In response to such visions, the language of voice and action speaks fear. Barnardo cannot resist an "I told you so" to Horatio, bold only until the ghost enters: "How now, Horatio? you tremble and look pale./Is not this something more than fantasy?" (1.1.53-4) Horatio similarly describes the guards and their "fear-surprised eyes": "they, distill'd/Almost to jelly with the act of fear,/Stand dumb and speak not to him" (1.2.203-6). In these descriptions of fear, Shakespeare captures the paradox of art championed by Renaissance painters: the language of gesture, though dumb, speaks the passions most eloquently. Thus Leonardo da Vinci asks, "If poetry describes the functioning of the mind, what does painting consider except the mind working through bodily gestures?" He advises painters to study what expressions and gestures accompany each emotion, especially in the dumb, "Who speak with movements of their hands and eyes and eyebrows and their whole person."[8]

In *Hamlet*, however, the gestures are heightened and given significance by description: Peacham's comment that good poetry, like good painting represents "by outward countenance of the inwarde spirite and affection"[9] fully applies. When Polonius asks Ophelia what Hamlet said to her in his visit, she does not describe his words, but rather his actions: his hand over his forehead, his shaking and sighing, "And with a look so piteous in purport/As if he had been loosed out of hell/To speak of horrors" (2.1.79-81). Captured vividly is the impression of fear and the insubstantiality of its causes, fear being a response to what is unknown. And fear is more accurately conveyed through bodily reactions than through the inevitably more secure language of rational symbols.

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[6] Bacon, *The Twoo Books . . . Of the . . . Aduancement of Learning* (London, 1605), sig. Kkl^{r}.

[7] Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London, 1553), sig. Ggii^{V}; and Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays*, tr. John Florio (London, 1603), p. 261.

[8] Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, tr. A. Philip MacMahon (Pritnceton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956), I, 13-19; and 149-57. On Leonardo's influence throughout the Renaissance, see Rensselaer Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis* (1940; rpt. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967), pp. 60-1.

[9] Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London, 1593), sig. Tiii^{V}.

At the court, one way we perceive very early the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius is their reliance on different aspects of language. Claudius, feeling no sorrow, desires others, too, to repress the natural side of language, and the passions spoken by it:

> Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
> The memory be green, and that it us befitted
> To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
> To be contracted in one brow of woe,
> Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
> That we with wisest sorrow think on him
> Together with remembrance of ourselves.
>
> (1.2.1-7)

No "brow of woe" for Claudius because his "discretion" denies his emotions before they are born; and grief for the former king he can only see as dangerous to his own rule. As surely as his balanced antitheses make the improbable link between marriage and funeral seem necessary, Claudius makes his coldness seem reasonable.[10] Gertrude joins in wishing that Hamlet would recover from grief: "Do not for ever with thy vailed lids/ Seek for thy noble father in the dust" (1.2.70-1). The King and Queen object to Hamlet's expression of his grief: it speaks in his face, in his lowered eyes.

Even in a first acquaintance with the play, I do not think that the King's reasons can excite so much sympathy as Hamlet's emotions. By explaining the language of grief he speaks, Hamlet tells us that his response is the sincere one:

> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
> Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
> No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
> Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
> Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
> That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,

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[10] On Claudius' style of speech, see Doran, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Language*, p. 40; and Stephen Booth, "On the Value of *Hamlet*," *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*, ed. Norman Rabkin (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 147-51.

> For they are actions that a man might play,
> But I have that within which passes show,
> These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
>
> (I.2.77-86)

Even voice and gesture may be counterfeited. But Hamlet's sighs, tears, and dejected expression are not seeming; they are outward signs of his sincere inner grief.

The unhealthiness of the King and Queen's request to Hamlet is suggested when Hamlet ends his grieving first soliloquy, "But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (I.2.159). According to Elizabethan medical theory, Hamlet's assertion must be taken literally: unless he spills his grief at his father's death and his mother's hasty marriage, his heart could burn itself up with the confined passions, or burst with the pressure.[11] The idea of speech as a purge was part of popular psychology, echoed everywhere. Richard Mulcaster recommended to his students "The clear and straining kinde of reading, bycause it stirreth the breath, . . . purgeth all the veins, [and] suffereth not superfluous humours to thicken, neither to congeale and freese to a dreggy residence"; especially the mad and the melancholy, he writes, "by talking be cleared . . . and receiue comfort from speeche, which makes room for health, where reume kept residence."[12] Trained by this same schoolmaster, Spenser tells his lady in a sonnet that he must speak his love, since "if I silent be, my hart will breake, / Or choked be with ouerflowing gall."[13] Hamlet, like Spenser, cannot make himself contain his feelings. When Claudius and Gertrude ask him to stay at court, he replies, "I shall in all my best obey you, madam" (I.2.120). His feelings break out in his sarcasm, where he sets the grief and anger in his voice against what the rational symbols say.

In the emotive language of voice and gesture there is thus a force to oppose the deceptiveness of words. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may hide their motives in uneasy lies, but the truth proclaims itself in their expressions. "Were you not sent for?" asks Hamlet; "Come, come, deal justly with me. Come, come—nay, speak . . . . You were sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to color" (2.2.274-80). That they continue to speak their lies against the truth in their faces appalls Hamlet, and turns him against his old friends.

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[11] On speech as a purge, see, for example, Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Health* (London, 1541), sigs. Oiiii^{v} -Pi^{r} ; and Stephen Batman, *Batman vppon Bartholome* (London, 1582), fols. 48^{r} , and 56^{r} .

[12] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions [on] the Training up of Children* (London, 1581), pp. 55-62.

[13] Edmund Spenser, Sonnet XLIII, 11.3-4, in *Amoretti*, quoted from *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. PrFss, 1912).

Combining distrust of words with frequent mention of the body's language—and with eloquent verse—Shakespeare achieves what would seem to be mutually exclusive effects. We understand that the social bond of language is broken, and yet we explore the consequences of the rupture in passionate words. The result is disorientation: we find ourselves in a nightmare world, irrational and emotional. In form we experience something like that which Hamlet experiences, although from a safe distance.

This nightmarish quality is nowhere clearer than in Hamlet's language after meeting the ghost, from his soliloquy—"O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? / And shall I couple hell? O fie, hold, hold, my heart" (1.5.92-3)—to his attempt to dismiss Horatio and the guards—"For every man hath business and desire, / Such as it is, and for my own poor part, I will go pray "(1.5.130-2). Feeling the rising passions, Hamlet calls on his heart to hold them in, and not break. Instead, the passions leap out in the short clauses, choppy sentences, and exclamations.[14] Unlike Claudius, whose sophisticated reason denies his feelings, Hamlet touches his emotions so close that he might lose himself to them. Horatio views Hamlet's words as merely incoherent—"These are but wild and whirling words, my lord" (1.5.133)--but to us they speak clearly Hamlet's hysteria.

In the middle of the play, Hamlet reaches inside himself to make something out of nothing, courage out of his own weakness. Ideas about language help to define the special nature of Hamlet's courage in the sense that Hamlet transforms his expression of passion in voice and action into the controlled and artful moving of others to emotional response. To begin with, Hamlet's "wild and whirling words" become the style of his "antic disposition." The Prince had suggested this transformation earlier when to Gertrude and the court he admitted that voice, expression, and gesture, the "forms, moods, shapes of grief" are "actions that a man might play."

What Hamlet makes of his emotional language is a political weapon.

[11] According to medieval and Renaissance grammarians, interjections do not signify things or thoughts, but rather attitudes or passions. Cf. *The Ars Minor of Donatus*, p. 55, on "interjection": "A part of speech signifying a state of the mind by an unusual tone of the voice." See also Richard Carew. "An Epistle Concerning the Excellencies of the English Tongue" (1595-6), publ. with *The Survey of Cornwall* (London, 1723), p. 5: "Again, for expressing our Passions, our Interjections are very apt and forcible."

Combining the sarcasm he had used with Claudius, his excited language in response to the ghost, and the grotesque actions of his visit to Ophelia in his role of madman, Hamlet is like the rhetorician, who, according to Quintilian, gives his speech power by conveying true but fictional emotions in delivery.[15] Hamlet's emotions—fear, anger, grief—are true, but he uses them to shape the fiction of the mad Hamlet. Thomas Wilson, whose English rhetoric Shakespeare may have read, follows Quintilian: the orator must "from his harte fetche his complaintes, in suche sort, that the matter maie appere . . . more greeuous to the eare, and . . . so heinous, that it requires . . . a spedy reformacion."[16] In his role of madman, Hamlet may thus speak the truths of his feelings: that Polonius, like Jephthah, sacrifices his daughter; that Claudius has turned Denmark into a prison; that his mother and Ophelia use beauty against honesty. And yet Hamlet may also use the passions that threaten to overwhelm him to sane ends. By playing mad, Hamlet does not so much gain time (as did the very young Amlethus in the source) as power over Claudius, and thus confidence in his own powers. The King could coolly respond to Hamlet's sarcasm because he knew the cause; nothing other than the main, his father's death and Gertrude's marriage. But confronted with "Hamlet's transformation" (2.2.5), not knowing the cause, Claudius is himself afraid.

As Hamlet had done in his "antic disposition," the Players transform the expression of emotion into the actor's language, an artful means to move an audience. Hamlet calls for "a passionate speech" (2.2.432), and the Player's speech is indeed full of passion: Pyrrhus' anger, Priam's courageous but pitiable fight, Hecuba's grief. Moreover, Hamlet responds more to the delivery than to the words of the speech: "Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect, / A broken voice, and his whole function suiting / With forms to his conceit" (2.2.555-7). In Hamlet's response, Shakespeare thus presents the characteristics of acting as his contemporaries saw them. Marston reminds his readers that plays "are writ to be spoken, not read . . . [for] the life of these things consists in action."[17] In *The Faerie Queene* Spenser describes Ease in the pageant of Busirane as an actor: "By liuely actions he gan bewray / Some argument of matter passioned."[18] In his soliloquy "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" (2.2.550 ff.), what Hamlet ponders is the combination of truth and fiction in the actor's delivery. Like Dekker's ideal actor, who is inspired by the poet's fiction to feel and deliver true emotion,[19] this one is moved to weep over the fiction of Hecuba. Such an action seems "monstrous" to Hamlet not because the player can feel and communicate his fiction with his entire form, but because Hamlet cannot render his own passion, motivated by a real death, in as forceful a manner (2.2.551-60).

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[15] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, tr. H.E. Butler (London: William Heinemann, 1920), XI. iii.61-2.

[16] Wilson, *Rhetorique*, sig. ti^{v}

[17] John Marston, "To My Equal Reader," in *The Fawn*, ed. Gerald A. Smith (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965), 11.65-7.

[18] *The Faerie Queene*, III. xii.4, in *Spenser: Poetical Works*.

In the middle of the soliloquy, unpacking his heart with words, Hamlet betrays the excitement, almost a panic, that we saw in him after the ghost. But thinking of the actors' ability to move passions through voice, expression, and gesture, Hamlet controls himself and turns his passions to active use:

> I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have by the very cunning of the scene
> Been strook so to the soul, that presently
> They have proclaim'd their malefactions:
> For murther, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ.
>
> (2.2.588-94)

If the players moved Hamlet, they might also move Claudius. Hamlet's discovery of a method to expose the King thus anticipates Heywood's defense of the aesthetic means of acting to reach a moral end. Hamlet has been moved to respond to events in his own life by watching the Players acting the story of Pyrrhus, Priam, and Hecuba, much in the same way that, Heywood argues, Hercules was moved to undertake his labors by the "liuely and well-spirited action" of the "personated" life of his father Jupiter.[20] For Heywood, the creative act of imitation becomes a way of releasing the power within men to reshape themselves. Thus acting might provide a Henry V to make other Henry V's: "What English blood seeing the person of any bold English man presented and doth not hugge his fame, and hunnye at his valor, . . . and . . . offers to him in his hart all prosperous performance, as if the Personator were the man Personated, so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action, that it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt" (sig. B4^{r}). Heywood furthermore offers a parallel to what Hamlet expects of Claudius: he cites two instances where spectators at a play were moved, by the actor's personation of a murderer, to confess their own guilt (sigs. G1^{v}-G2^{v}). Hamlet hopes that by the player's art he can so surprise Claudius' guilty soul into a confession. If he cannot make him speak, he may at least make him express his guilt in his looks, "the miraculous organ" through which murder may speak without a tongue.

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[19] See "Prologue" to *If This Be Not a Good Play*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953-61), III, 122: "That Man giue mee; whose Brest fill'd by the *Muses*, / With Raptures, Into a second them infuses: / Can giue an Actor, Sorrow, Rage, Ioy, Passion, / Whilst hee again by (self-same Agitation) / Commands the *Hearers*, sometimes drawing out *Teares*, / Then smiles, and fills them both with *Hopes* and *Feares*."

[20] Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), sig. B3^{r} . All other references to this work will be to this edition.

Hamlet's instructions to the players (3.2.1-45) are necessary because his plan absolutely depends on the actors' presenting fictional passions so convincing that they arouse in Claudius a real feeling of guilt. The Prince emphasizes communication of emotion by voice, expression, and gesture: no bellowing to split the ears of the groundlings, no mouthing of the lines, no overdone sawing of the air—but not the reverse, either. The reason for his concern may be inferred from his general advice: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end . . . was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure (3.2.17-24). If the passion presented is too extreme, the audience will not apply the action of the play to themselves; if the passion is underplayed, the audience will not be moved. Hamlet hopes that with a natural balance between the two, Claudius will see his own vices in the "mirror" of the players, and be moved to reveal his guilt. From the actors, Hamlet turns to Horatio, directing him to give Claudius "heedful note" (3.2.84). If Claudius will not be moved to speech, he may yet reveal his guilt in the alternative language of expression and gesture.

Hamlet's plan does work.[21] With Hamlet as chorus, Claudius breaks off the play the second time he sees the murder performed, and we learn that the look of guilt was there. "Didst perceive?" Hamlet asks Horatio; "Upon the talk of the pois'ning?" And Horatio affirms that Claudius spoke his guilt in his expression: "I did very well note him" (3.2.287-90). Moreover, Claudius confesses in words in the next scene. The plan does not miss, but it succeeds not quite fully. The court do not interpret

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[21] Cf. Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play, and Duel* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 28: "The words [of the play-within-the-play] are not a substitute for an attack upon the King. They are an attack. Hamlet's choice of weapons is correct. Words are a weapon against which the policy and poison of Claudius is ineffective. Sitting at the play the King is poisoned by a mortal self-knowledge."

Claudius' reactions as do Horatio and Hamlet, and Claudius does not confess to anyone but God and us.

After the play, the short clauses and exclamations of Hamlet's excited, almost frenzied voice reappear. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bring the Queen's message, they can find no sense in Hamlet's words: "Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair" (3.2.308-9). What we hear in Hamlet's voice, though, is not incoherence, but rather tense exultation: the Prince is drawn as taut as a string tuned to concert pitch in an old piano, and he is in as much danger of breaking. His restraint with his mother is thus an act of strength, and ideas about languge are again used to point up this courage. He will put his passions to use: "Let me be cruel, not unnatural; / I will speak daggers to her, but use none" (3.2.395-6). Hamlet plans to ease his own passions and punish his mother at once—but in words, not in violent acts.

When Hamlet meets with his mother, his force with her frightens her, and her cry frightens Polonius: the scene is a chain reaction of fear. Hamlet too, is caught by the panic. Breaking through his thin cloak of restraint to the fear beneath it, he stabs through the arras. It is not surprising that Hamlet kills Polonius; it is surprising that he does not harm his mother as well. Instead, he turns his anger and disgust into a sermon to "wring" Gertrude's "heart" (3.4.35). His speech, like the play that was a "mirror" for Claudius' crime, is a "glass" wherein she will see the "inmost part" of herself (11.19-20). It is an impassioned reflection of Gertrude's fault in marrying Claudius: how could she not see the difference between the two brothers—the one all that is a man, the other a "mildewed ear" (11.60-4). Hamlet chastizes Gertrude's hypocrisy, which makes her "marriage vows/ As false as dicers' oaths," and her "religion . . . / A rhapsody of words" (11.44-8); her example calls all sons and daughters to succumb shamelessly to lust (11.81-8). And Gertrude responds: "These words like daggers enter in my ears. / No more, sweet Hamlet!" (3.4.95-6)

When the ghost enters, he speaks only once, calling up Hamlet's purposed revenge on Claudius, and expressing concern for Gertrude. But he speaks again in action before he leaves:

> look you how pale he glares!
> His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
> Would make them capable.—Do not look upon me,
> Lest with this piteous action you convert
> My stern effects, then what I have to do
> Will want true color—tears perchance for blood.
>
> (11.125-30)

At this crucial moment the ghost's look does convert Hamlet's anger into pity, enabling him to restrain his rage at his mother within the bond of words.[22] Thus Hamlet urgently asks Gertrude to put her new knowledge into practice, to leave Claudius and "Assume a virtue" even if she does not have it (1.160). What Hamlet asks of the Queen is the courage he himself shows, that of imposing restraint on a heart without it.

In this respect, as in many others, Ophelia and Laertes serve as foils to Hamlet in the final acts of the play: they betray a lack of the restraint that becomes Hamlet's courage. A gentleman reports Ophelia's madness, mirrored in her speech:

> She speaks much of her father, says she hears
> There's tricks i'th' world, and hems, and beats her heart,
> Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt
> That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
> Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
> The hearers to collection; they yawn at it,
> And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
> Which as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
> Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
> Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.
>
> (4.5.4-13)

Having no logical movement in thought or syntax, Ophelia's speech is merely voice, gesture, and passion: what men share with animals, according to many Renaissance writers.[23] Pointing out that one cannot understand her speech, however, makes the audience pay more attention to it, and we pick out the themes of the betraying lover and the dead father. As in the first two acts, this language of passion speaks more truth than does the rational discourse of the court. Horatio and Gertrude recognize that hearers may discover a sense in Ophelia's speech that is dangerous to the ruling family (4.5.4-16); and when Laertes sees and hears Ophelia, he interprets her speech exactly as they feared someone might: "Hadst thou thy wits and didst persuade revenge, / It could not move thus" (4.5.169-70). Ophelia gives way to the emotions that Hamlet had restrained and directed to political ends; her irrational speech, directed to no end, yet moves Laertes to give way to his passions.

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[22] John Erskine, in *The Character of Hamlet* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp. 51-2, argues that seeing the ghost a second time marks an emotional catharsis for Hamlet in which his anger is converted into pity, and his planned revenge into justice.

[23] See, for example, Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (London, 1588), sig. 17^v; Thomas Nashe, *Svmmers Last Will and Testament* (1600), in *Works*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (London: A.H. Bullen, 1904-10), III, 254 (11.675-8); and Montaigne, *Essayes*, p. 261.

Laertes' words and actions, on the other hand, are directed to the wrong end. When Laertes promises to revenge his father's death on Hamlet, Claudius warns him not to waste his anger in words:

> That we would do,
> We should do when we would; for this "would" changes,
> And hath abatements and delays as many
> As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
> And then this "should" is like a spendthrift's sigh,
> That hurts by easing.
> (4.7.118-23)

Like the prodigal's sigh that eases his guilt, Laertes' hot promises may purge the passion that should be saved, according to Claudius, to incite him to kill Hamlet. Ironically, Laertes becomes exactly this sort of man; he curses Claudius, cools off, and becomes his ally against Hamlet.

Hamlet itself, like the player's speech on Priam and Hecuba, is a story of human passions: the guards' fear of the ghost, Laertes' anger, Ophelia's grief, the King's and Gertrude's remorse, and Hamlet's conflicting fear, grief, and anger. Yet how different is Hamlet, unpacking his heart with words, from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who confess their hearts in their looks. Ophelia, like "pictures, or mere beasts" (4.5.86), speaks her grief in her winks and nods and songs, while her brother has "a speech a' fire" (4.7.190), hot words always ready. Ideas about language thus help to differentiate the characters by pointing up their individual ways of handling emotions. Still, all the characters do speak their passions, in one form of language or another. The resulting impression is one of mutability, owing to the passionately varying nature of mankind.

Human mutability is not something that Hamlet easily accepts, in himself, or in others. How can his mother be first "Niobe, all tears" at his father's death (1.2.149), and then wife to Claudius? How is it that Hamlet, "Prompted to . . . revenge by heaven and hell" (2.2.584), yet waits to do something, four months later?

The graveyard scene is a turning point in Hamlet's response to changing human passions. As he reflects upon the insignificance of human action that the skulls represent, Hamlet extends his observation to speech: "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once" (5.1.75-6). The courtier no longer praises his lord's horse in order to beg it (11.82-6).

The lawyer no longer relates actions of battery (11.99-103). This sense of the transience of spoken words was something felt by other Renaissance men, finding its way exen into a treatise on pronunciation: "And though the voice be a more liuely kind of speech [than writing], yet in respect it is but onely a sleight accident made of so light a substance as the ayre, it is no sooner vttered but it is dissolued, euery simple sound doth expell and extinguish the sound going before it, so that the eare can haue but one touch of the ayre beating vpon it to declare the speech vnto the mind."[24] Contemplating the continual change in language, the Count in Castiglione's *The Courtier* concludes, "at the last both wee and whatsoeuer is ours, are mortal."[25] In the graveyard, Hamlet finds that only the jester continues to repeat the same message: "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come" (11.192-4). What the jester said in satire and bitter song, his skull, a *memento mori*, may still speak, though dumb. The message is mortality. The whirlwind of passions, whether turned to words or actions, will end. The play gives to all characters the epitaph that Hamlet speaks over the body of Polonius: "This counsellor / Is now most still, most secret, and most grave, / Who was in life a foolish prating knave" (3.4.213-15).

Hamlet is not only a story of passion, but also of restraint of passion, in Fortinbras' men, who for honor "Go to their graves like beds" (4.4.62), in Hamlet, who overcomes his premonitory fear before the fencing match. More importantly, it is a story of getting from one to the other, from passion to restraint; courage, in fact, is not possible without the initial human weakness. We see such courage in Horatio's speaking to the ghost despite his fear, in Hamlet's growth through the soliloquies, even in Claudius' confession, when he almost takes the courage to bend his heartstrings to remorse, but lets all slip for his crown, his own ambition, and his queen.

At the end of the play, ideas about language reinforce our final sense of courage in the characters of *Hamlet*. Elizabethans thought that speech, generally beneficial as a purge of the passions, at death might hasten the loss of life, by what one writer called "too great exhalation and wasting of the kinde heate."[26] The men and women of *Hamlet* die by their sacrificial words, as well as by poison and swords, Gertrude spending her last breath to warn Hamlet of the drink (5.2.309-10), Laertes exchanging forgiveness with Hamlet in his final words (11.329-31). Only Claudius

[24] Robert Robinson, *The Art of Pronuntiation* (London, 1617), sig. A3^{v} .

[25] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, tr. Thomas Hoby (1561; London, 1588), sig. F3^{v} .

[26] *Batman vppon Bartholome*, fol. 17^{r} .

refuses to face death with restraint, his last words a futile plea for life: "O, yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt" (1.324).

Hamlet begins his dying speech without such restraint, but takes courage and stops himself:

> You that look pale, and tremble at this chance,
> That are but mutes or audience to this act,
> Had I but time—as this fell sergeant, Death,
> Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—
> But let it be.
>
> (5.2.334-8)

No time now for melodrama; Hamlet has other business for his last words. "Fortinbras," he tells us, "has my dying voice" (1.356). Horatio's line, "Now cracks a noble heart" (1.359), emphasizes that Hamlet's words are tragic ones, spending breath and the heat of the heart to hasten death.

Before his last speech, however, Hamlet passes his office of speaker to Horatio: "I am dead, / Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright" (5.2.338-9). Vowing himself more Roman than Dane, Horatio reaches for the poisoned cup, but Hamlet requires of him a different kind of courage:

> O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity a while,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story.
>
> (11.344-9)

Hamlet asks his friend to live and heal his name; Horatio must suffer to do it, not only from the knowledge of this harsh world, but also from the passions he feels at the death of his friend, passions that will be raised again when he tells Hamlet's story. Until this moment, Horatio's stoicism may seem too easily won. Here in Horatio's one rash act, then Hamlet's requirement of greater restraint from a man already under great strain, we see again the depth and humanity of the courage celebrated in the play.

With Hamlet's "the rest is silence" (1.358), we have come full circle. The uneasy silence of the first scene has given way to the voices of passion, and those in turn to the mysterious silence of death. While we shall take with us the echo of the passionate players who out-Herod Herod, we shall also retain some of the sympathetic understanding of silence that Hamlet has learned from the dead.

Hamlet's final limit of silence, though, is transcended. In the feeling restraint and formal parallelism of his account, Horatio lives up to Hamlet's requirement of courage:

> And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
> How these things came about. So shall you hear
> Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
> Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
> And in this upshot, purposes mistook
> Fall'n on th' inventors' heads: all this can I
> Truly deliver.
>
> (5.2.379-86)

The final transformation is not, after all, from speech to silence, but from the destructiveness of human passions to the truth in the story of them. Fortinbras listens and commands that, for Hamlet, "The soldiers' music and the rite of war / Speak loudly" (11.399-400). Music, the sublimation of the voice of passion into something transcendent, is Hamlet's final voice.[27]

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[27] This paper was delivered as part of the series of the Institute for Research in Humanities at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1979-80.

NOTES

A Note on *Hamlet* 1.4.36-38

DEBORAH T. CURREN AQUINO

> . . . the dram of ev'l
> Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
> To his own scandal.

G.B. Harrison has referred to the above lines as the most famous of all disputed passages in *Hamlet* and possibly in all of Shakespeare.[1] The Furness Variorum edition, which is now admittedly out of date, gives six pages of notes to this passage alone. In the present essay I am not interested in trying to discover new emendations for the chiefly disputed words "ev'l" and "of a doubt,"[2] but in pursuing the dramatic significance of the passage for the overall structure, characterization, and key topics of thought in *Hamlet*. What triggered this interest was Dover Wilson's claim that "the 'dram of eale' crux . . . is of small dramatic consequence, belonging as it does to a gnomic passage and lying off the main track of the play. Its solution, therefore, tells us nothing new about Hamlet, as "sullied flesh" does for example. Nevertheless, Hamlet's observations upon the 'corruption' which a noble character may take from the stamp of one defect are not inappropriate to the subject of textual corruption: *Hamlet*."[3] Contrary to Wilson's claim, I believe that the passage in question is not only textually approriate but dramatically fit as well.

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[1] G.B. Harrison, ed., *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1948), p. 893, n.

[2] I accept the general consensus that "evil," given the Renaissance carelessness with minim letters and the frequent confusion of unclosed "a's" with "u's" and "n's", is the proper emendation instead of "base," a prominent contender in the past. With respect to "of a doubt," while I do not reject the most widely accepted emendation "often dout" (dout being a contractual version of do out—put out, extinguish), I prefer what seems to be the runner-up, "doubt." In a play of searching, questioning, suspecting, where the mental action of doubting often seems more important than physical action, it seems to me a proper as well as possible emendation.

[3] D. Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's Hamlet and the Problem of Its Transmission* (Cambridge: University Press, 1934), p. 322.

Hamlet is a play in which nearly every line resonates with keen, almost overwhelming significance, and a play which reveals new levels of meaning with each re-reading. The "dram of ev'l" passage is no exception.

Structurally, the positioning of the lines is strategic. The opening of scene four parallels scene one in that we are once again on the cold and foreboding guard-platform at the bewitching hour of midnight, waiting for something ominous. Hamlet talks with Horatio and Marcellus about the intemperance of Danish drinking customs and in so doing criticizes Claudius. He goes from the particular to the more general as he moves away from the specificity of Claudius and Danish customs to man in general. As is typical of Hamlet, he thinks analogically:

> So, oft it chances in particular men,
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty
> (Since nature cannot choose his origin),
> By their o'ergrowth of some complexion
> Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
> Or by some habit, that too much o'er-levens
> The form of plausive manners—that these men,
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being nature's livery, or fortune's star
> His virtue's else, be they as pure as grace,
> As infinite as man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault. (23-36)

Hamlet appears to be scrupulously obsessed with single, distinct flaws rather than evil in general or universally. For it is always evil in the singular, not the plural: particular fault, stamp of one defect, some vicious mole of nature, some habit. These single faults or defects play off the generality of nature, the "pales and forts of reason," the form of "plausive manners," and finally "general censure." Then in almost maximlike simplicity, Hamlet concisely sums up the rather prolonged declamation in "the dram of ev'l" lines. It is a moment of cognitive appraisal of the human condition, a moment of calm reflection in which the particularity of the revels, Danish customs, and Claudius is lifted to a level of generalization, if not abstraction. But Hamlet still talks of evil in the singular, evil as a small entity, a dram.

The passage constitutes a moment of quietude, a calm before the storm of the first encounter between Hamlet and the Ghost. In a sense, all that leads up to the stage direction "Enter Ghost" (39) is a kind pf elaborate prologue. The main action of commanding, seeking, and achieving revenge now begins. We are ready to move, and how better than with such a moment of philosophical reflection before the sudden shift to fear, anxiety, and emotional disquiet in the next lines:

> Hor: Look, my Lord, it comes!
> Ham: Angels and ministers of grace defend us! (39-40)

In short, the "dram of ev'l" passage is a point of mediation between two worlds: the loud, physical, earthy, boisterous, reveals of Claudius and the ominous, chilling, supernatural world of the Ghost. Before the lines in question Hamlet had been talking about Claudius; after the lines, his attention will be focused on old Hamlet.

The positioning of the lines takes on added significance in that they are loaded with commentary on the human action of the play, having relevance for all of the characters, Hamlet included. Harry Levin is right to caution us against reading too much of the Aristotelian flaw into the lines, critics having argued that the passage demonstrates Hamlet's own awareness of his particular fault.[4] Levin's caveat notwithstanding, the play does spend a great deal of time in expository discourse on the nature of man, the noble versus the base. Practically all of the characters are referred to as noble or are at least aware of nobility of character in reference to others. None is absolutely evil in the way Iago or Richard III or Goneril and Regan are. Claudius is a villain, of course, but he is one who tries to pray and who seems genuinely concerned for Gertrude. There is also something more human about him than that devil without the cloven hoof, Iago. In scheming against Hamlet, Claudius is worried about his security and position; he is out to save his neck and is, at least in the begining, on the defensive. Like most of the characters in this play, he is also puzzled by the behavior of his nephew, puzzlement that gives rise to suspicion. Before the "dram of ev'l" passage, Claudius has possibly aroused the audience's suspicions by his slick performance in scene two; after this passage, Claudius will always appear as Hamlet's antagonist, thus seemingly the villain. But before his villainy is fully realized in the action of the play proper, Shakespeare asks the audience to see him as part of the whole human condition, a condition that mediates the noble and the base, a condition that stands somewhere in between the world of beasts and that of angels, a condition in which nobility can be flawed by single, particular defects.

In addition to being positioned strategically, the passage is particularly revealing about Hamlet, who functions here like a choric commentator generalizing on mankind. Within the character of Hamlet two temperaments war with each other: that of the thoughtful, reflective Renaissance scholar and courtier, and that of the rash, impetuous, impulsive, more primitive epic warrior. He thinks and consequently does not act at times, only to act hastily and rashly at other times. We have had a glimpse of the emotionally racked, tempestuous, somewhat incoherent side in the first soliloquy. Now we see the more philosophical, cognitive side. The fundamental duality of Hamlet is accented even more sharply by the "dram of ev'l" passage because the lines contrast so abruptly with the tone and visceral appeal of Hamlet's words that immediately follow when he first sees the ghost. It is precisely this alternation between Hamlet the thinker and Hamlet the doer, Hamlet the cognitive man and Hamlet the keyed up, emotional man, Hamlet the refined sophisticate and Hamlet the instinctual primitive that provides the key to the play's compositional rhythm. Throughout the play such alternations will be the prevailing pattern. What Shakespeare seems to have done in "the dram of ev'l" passage is to give us a preview of that pattern or rhythm in microcosm.

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[4] *The Question of Hamlet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 26.

It is also noteworthy that Hamlet chooses the word "dram"—a term of measurement—in talking about mankind, for this play is one of continual measuring, comparing, analogizing. Hamlet is always comparing and measuring people: his father is measured against Hyperion; Claudius, against a satyr; Gertrude, against both the abstraction frailty and the mythological Niobe. This tendency to measure is extended to himself as well: the negative comparisions of himself to the players, the gravediggers, Fortinbras and his men marching into Poland, and to Laertes. In one word, we receive an insight into a mode of thought that characterizes not only the character of Hamlet but the play *Hamlet* as well.

But "dram" is not the only significant word in the passage. All of the key words—dram, evil, noble, substance, doubt, and scandal—are intriguingly relevant to the action and thought of the play. As noted previously, dram is important as a term of measurement and doubt is most appropriate, given the cat-and-mouse games played by Hamlet and Claudius and the whole mental state of uncertainty that engulfs Hamlet. Both words, however, have additional significance.

The third meaning of dram given by the *OED* is that of liquid measurement: (a) a fluid dram; and (b) a small draught of cordial, stimulant or spirituous liquor. The example used to illustrate this meaning is taken from *Romeo and Juliet*, V, i, 60: "Let me have a dram of poyson." Death brought on by poisonous liquids strikes both old Hamlet and Gertrude. Out of all the words for infinitesimal measurement, Hamlet chooses "dram," and he does so moments before he and the audience hear the

Ghost's story concerning the manner in which Old Hamlet died. Whether a conscious stroke of genius or not, the word choice is singularly appropriate.

One of the meanings listed by the *OED* for doubt is apprehension, dread, fear, a thing to be dreaded. Given the fact that the ghost is to appear to Hamlet within moments and the fact that the supernatural in the presence of this ghost hovers over the whole play, this rather subordinate meaning takes on added importance.

The word "evil" is self-explanatory. As a tragedy, *Hamlet* deals with metaphysical meaning, the ontology of man, goodness and evil, and the consequences of both. Evil in all its forms of baseness contrasts neatly with noble, a prominent iterative term in the play. Such a contrast accents a major thematic pattern, namely the duality of man as both noble and base, as part angel and part beast. "Substance" also participates in thematic patterns: the substance or essence of man, the body versus the spirit, shapes and shadows versus something of substance as in the discourse on dreams between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (II, 2, 257-266). Substance as something solid plays off all of the references to liquidity: melting, dew, drowning, the water that decomposes the human body, poison, and, of course, "dram." Then there is the word "scandal." So much of the play's action reeks of scandalous events *and* the desire to hush them up so as to avoid general censure: suicide, incest, fratricide, regicide, madness, casual slaughters. Hamlet's chief concern during his last moments is for his wounded name. The loss of honor and reputation is what precipitates his last request of Horatio. Not only, then, do the words in the passage capture the various meanings, topics, and conflicts of the play, but in some cases (dram/substance, evil/noble) they even participate in the principle of contrast that unifies and controls the awesome heterogeneity of *Hamlet*.

Misreading *Hamlet*

MATHEW WINSTON

"When do we agree and say, 'There has been enough about this book; henceforth there is nothing more to say'?" Montaigne's question is particularly applicable to *Hamlet*. Virtually everything that can possibly be said about the play and its protagonist has already been said. We have been treated to arguments that Hamlet is melancholy, merry, sane, mad, Oedipal, homosexual, Puritan, Catholic, and so on, ad infinitum. What theories are left after Lilian Winstanley's claim in *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession* (1921) that Hamlet is a cross between King James and the Earl of Essex, or after E.P. Vining's contention in *The Mystery of Hamlet* (1881) that the Prince is actually a woman?

The danger of running out of new interpretations of *Hamlet* only exists, however, if we limit ourselves to saying something valid about the play. The faint-hearted may take comfort from T.S. Eliot's Shakespeare Association lecture of 1927: "About anyone so great as Shakespeare it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong." More recently, Harold Bloom has told us in *A Map of Misreading* (1975) that any strong reading or interpretation "is always a misreading."

In an attempt to expand the scope of *Hamlet* studies, and to exhaust a few more possibilities, I offer the following brief misreadings or ways of being wrong about the play.

I. Character: "When he's not himself"

Is it not possible that the man whom operetta librettist William S. Gilbert called "idiotically sane / With lucid intervals of lunacy" might have been a drug addict? The circumstantial evidence is strong. Hamlet has recently been a university student, a member of a group whose propensity for chemical self-abuse is well known. By the time we meet him in the play, he is so strung out that he hears imaginary ghosts, sees visions in the clouds, walks about ungartered, has lost his sexual interest in Ophelia, and is given to casual violence. We may assume that he brings a cache with him when Claudius sends him to England, but he is separated from it by his unexpected transfer to the pirate ship. Hamlet undergoes a cold-turkey cure and returns to Denmark, where he no longer sees ghosts and finally is able to take effective action.

II. Imagery: Squeak Up

As everyone knows, Hamlet tells Claudius that *The Murder of Gonzago* is named *The Mousetrap*. And most scholars or footnote-readers understand the pun when Hamlet states that the title is derived "tropically" (clarified in the Q_1 spelling, "trapically"). But no one has followed through the implications of this crucial image.

Claudius is the "mouse" that Hamlet is trying to trap. And if Claudius is a mouse, then, logically, his brother must have been one as well. This is overwhelmingly confirmed by Francisco's remark on the battlements, "Not a mouse stirring" (I.i.10), which also presciently anticipates Clement C. Moore's "The Night before Christmas." Franscisco is relieved because the ghost of King Hamlet, the mouse, has not appeared that evening.

Hamlet is naturally unsettled by the rodential aspect of the Danish royal family. He tries to enlarge his father's image by calling him a "mole" (I.v). And he wants to separate his mother from the taint. This, no doubt, is why he tells Gertrude not to let Claudius "call you his mouse" (III.iv). He knows whereof he speaks, having just tried to kill Claudius by thrusting his rapier through the arras with the poignant question, "A rat?" (III.iv). In order to make sure that the audience comprehends the importance of this image, in the following scene Shakespeare has Gertrude emphatically repeat the phrase twice to Claudius, who understands, "It had been so with us, had we been there."

In short, the question that haunts Hamlet is less "to be or not to be" than "are you a man or a mouse?"

III. Plot: Method against Madness

Fortinbras, tired of his subordinate position, "with divine ambition puffed," eager to become King of Denmark, and shrewdly aware of Hamlet's mental instability, hires an actor to play the ghost of Hamlet's father. He succeeds in his plot to drive Hamlet out of his mind, bring about wholesale slaughter at Elsinore, and step in as the new ruler. Everyone is hoist with Fortinbras' petar!

BOOK REVIEW

Shakespeare's Tragic Practice. By BERTRAND EVANS. London: Oxford University Press, 1979. Pp. 327+xi.

Some twenty years ago, in *Shakespeare's Comedies*—a laconic title which belied the wealth of exciting experience within—Professor Evans first showed what complex and dramatically satisfying effects could be revealed in the comedies of Shakespeare by a study of what he called "discrepant awarenesses." In his long-awaited new book he offers a similarly rewarding study of the dramatist's uses of discrepant awareness in the tragedies. Both books offer unexpected insights into and new interpretations of particular scenes, roles and plays. In particular the recent volume offers a view of Hamlet the character which will provide food for thought in the minds of every reader of this journal. The Hamlet who emerges from the fourth chapter of *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* is a far more positive and commanding figure than any we have been used to seeing in books or on the stage for the last twenty years and more.

In order to explain how this can be so, it will be helpful to look back for a moment at the aims and methods of the earlier book, to see how Professor Evans's arguments have developed. We can all recall how, in the comedies, the comic effects of a particular scene may depend upon the audience's superior knowledge. They know more than any one character does about the real truth of plot, character or incident, but each character may also possess an awareness different from that of his fellows, and it is the discrepancies between these many awarenesses that the dramatist exploits to surprise his actors and amuse his auditors. Recall, for example, the scene in *Twelfth Night* where Sir Toby has planned to get his own amusement out of pitting a timorous Cesario against a cowardly Aguecheek for a second time. Aguecheek attacks the supposed Cesario, but Cesario (who is really the twin Sebastian) turns on him and fights. First we see the astonishment of Aguecheek at the fighting reply, the surprise of the unoffending Sebastian at being attacked and the amazement of Sir Toby when Sebastian (whom he takes for the timorous Cesario—who, in any case, is really Viola, and, unknown to all, the twin of Sebastian) turns upon both his assailants. Into this scene, enters a puzzled and furious Olivia to stop the fight and offer immediate marriage to Sebastian whom she takes for Cesario (who is really a woman, Viola, and, as the audience knows, in love with Orsino). Much of the comedy here turns upon the discrepancies in awareness of what is really happening between the individual characters on the stage, but the audience has an even richer awareness of further complications in store for all, since it knows what no one else in the play yet knows fully, that Viola (who is in male disguise) has an identical twin brother who has survived the wreck in which each twin believed the other to have been drowned. Any connoisseur of complication will see that this by no means exhausts the comic potential of this particular scene and that the audience's satisfaction is largely dependent upon its knowing more—much more—than the characters do.

In his progressive study of the developing use of discrepant awareness in the comedies Professor Evans reveals a comedy of hitherto unperceived richness and complexity. Can he do something similar for the tragedies? The very title of the new work constitutes a pun, the double senses of which lie at the heart of his book. Most students will have thought long about the implications of Shakespeare's favourite sense of the word "practice." It ordinarily connotes skilful political intrigue, cunning plot or villainous deception for the direct personal advantage of the villain or villains. In *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice*, the word has another special sense: it refers to the habitual way in which Shakespeare keeps alive the interest of the audience by giving them information withheld from one or more of the characters. It is a practice (habit) of Shakespeare's to let his audience into secrets (some of which do involve villainous deception) unknown to some of the characters in the play. By so doing, the dramatist exploits, in tragedy, as well as in comedy, the "discrepant awareness" of events, plots and character, possessed by individual characters and by the audience.

In this volume, as in his earlier book, Professor Evans's methods lead us to a renewed appreciation of the extraordinary rapidity of Shakespeare's growth as a dramatist and to a fresh perception of the variety of his methods. In the earlier chapters of this book he shows us the immense growth of dramatic skill, during the short period which elapses between the writing of *Titus Andronicus* and the writing of *Romeo and Juliet*, in Shakespeare's ability to manage the awareness of participants and audience. It is here, however, that we begin to see that the dramatist's exploitation of the awareness gap is no longer for sheer fun. In tragedy, "a participant's unawareness is likely to prove responsible for more than passing effects," and the means by which discrepant awarenesses arise will become an essential part of the interest of the play, while "the unawareness of certain participants provides the channel through which action moves towards the catastrophe." Whereas Professor Evans sees in the crudity of the dramatic technique of *Titus Andronicus* resemblances to the comedies, in that "the unawareness of the participants is exploited for passing effects only" and "we are to be entertained by whatever passing chance may provide opportunity for sensationalism," he demonstrates that in *Romeo and Juliet* "because of the Prologue we hold advantage over all participants even at the moment the action commences, and we retain our advantage to the end of the play . . . which is unique among the tragedies in leaving its burden of awareness upon us." For the full meaning of the judgements cited, the interested reader must turn to the first two chapters of the book where he will find other perceptions, just and thought-provoking, which he may not have made for himself—as, for instance, that Old Capulet advances the day of marriage from Thursday to Wednesday when Juliet returns from the Friar in sudden obedience because she now has the sleeping potion; or that it is not the Friar's failure to reach Romeo but Balthasar's success in reaching him which brings about the hero's sucide.

The plan of *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* is to consider each of the tragedies in historical order and to show what a study of Shakespeare's use of practices can tell us about each play. *Julius Caesar*, the next play, is the one which shows "less use of practices and discrepant awareness than almost any other play of Shakespeare's." *Hamlet* provides a dramatic contrast to its predecessor, *Julius Caesar*, in more senses than one. It provides the richest field of all for a study of Shakespeare's handling of awarenesses and degrees of awareness, and this study helps to show much more clearly what really happens in *Hamlet*. A more consistent character study of the hero than we have read in a long time emerges from this chapter. Professor Evans points out that at one time or another the audience holds advantage over every person in the play; that once we have heard the Ghost divulge its secret to Hamlet we hold tremendous advantage over every person in the play except Hamlet; and that we hold multiple advantages in all the major scenes. From the book's point of view, "*Hamlet* is truly exceptional, rivalling such busy comedies as *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; among the tragedies only *King Lear* with its trio of avid practisers—Edmund, Edgar, Kent—comes near it in this respect." There are six separate practices by the King (including Laertes's multiple practice) and three by Hamlet, and the unawareness of many of the participants "provides the channel through which action moves towards the catastrophe." But what is most remarkable in the play, and peculiar to it in these terms, is that "*Hamlet* is Shakespeare's sole tragedy in which the highest level of awareness next our own, is occupied by the hero."

The remainder of this crucial chapter is devoted to showing the implications for reader, actor and audience of this important truth, that Hamlet, "and not the villain, Claudius, is sole proprietor of the topmost secret of his play." If we can accept this premise (and how can we not, for we alone, apart from the hero, are privy to the Ghost's revelation?) we must then see a Hamlet who is waiting in states of mind varying from impatience to frustration, and hoping to find an opportunity to avenge his father's death in such a way that those who do not know the Ghost's secret will believe what Hamlet may tell them about it—and therefore believe that his killing of Claudius is justified. The Hamlet of this chapter becomes a much more positive and successful character than he has long been represented as upon the British stage. The argument is worth following.

Not only does Hamlet know more than any other character in the play: he also has the acutest intelligence of any of the characters in the play and uses it to work towards a public revenge which will also clearly appear to be a justified revenge to the court of Denmark. As Professor Evans points out, all who have seen the Ghost in the first scenes are sworn to secrecy, in order that Hamlet's secret may eventually be sprung with maximum effect upon an unsuspecting Claudius. In the meantime, Hamlet protects himself from rational observation by a lunacy which mimics "the classic symptoms of melancholia." He is, therefore, not mad, although there are scenes in which, for politic reasons, he puts on his antic act with great violence. Such a scene is the one of Hamlet's interview with Ophelia, a scene in which his apparent insanity protects his own secret from observation. At the end of this scene, after Ophelia's lament for his condition, "while we know that the Prince is not at all 'blasted with ecstasy,' but is in full possession of all his brilliant faculties, we know also that, as Hamlet himself has told us, he is engaged in a deadly game to which we can expect one ending."

For such a thesis, Hamlet may be an opportunist, but he is not a random or a wasteful one. Professor Evans explains Hamlet's next great practice, the play within the play, as a necessary part of the process of convincing Horatio of Claudius's guilt so that Horatio may bear testimony to it, if Hamlet should die: "Horatio must witness the King's reaction for it is his testimony that will be needed when the time comes to expose the truth to the world." The sheer ingeniousness of the play scene has often been noted but this argument shows us that, while we may be aware that 'The Murder of Gonzago' is a play within a play ("for it is within *Hamlet* that we watch Hamlet and Horatio watch the King who watches the play"), it is a necessary part of Hamlet's cautious and deliberate progress towards the publicly justified revenge that the Ghost appears to have exacted from him. To the affrighted Claudius, the play scene and the killing of Polonius are further proofs of Hamlet's dangerous lunacy, and he is deceived by Hamlet's main practice when he finds it necessary to send him off to

England. Claudius over-reaches himself when he commands Hamlet's death, because Hamlet's discovery of his uncle's practice makes him anxious and eager to accomplish the revenge upon his unexpected return. Professor Evans sees this as further evidence of Hamlet's intelligence.

The surprise of Hamlet's return causes Claudius to over-reach himself fatally—to over-react in plotting the complicated treachery which eventually procures his own death as well as Hamlet's. What the audience should be able to see at the end of the play is that Hamlet, by playing a waiting (and watching) game, has at last put himself into a position where the King (and Laertes) will do him a *public* wrong. Hamlet's own practices have prospered in unnerving the King so much that he does over-reach himself in exactly this way. For the King has failed four times to entrap and even to kill him, and Hamlet knows that the King has meant to kill him, though the King cannot be sure that Hamlet knows this.

This Hamlet is a positive and successful hero. What is more this is a Hamlet who knows himself—who "is himself aware of the native habit of alertness, that, when danger is near, sets his brains to work: 'Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,' he tells Horatio of the events on board ship, 'they had begun the play.' " This Hamlet, then, though he may not know exactly what Claudius has plotted next, is aware that "he is summoned to a new death-trap; moreover, not only is he certain of the death-trap, but he expects, this time, to die in it." The last stages of Professor Evans's argument are conducted with an intricate persuasiveness to which it is impossible to do justice in a review, but the Hamlet of the last scenes is an honourable Prince, using the opportunities which Claudius and Laertes have given him, to carry out, at last, the mission imposed by the Ghost. Circumstances play into his hands and he takes revenge upon the guilty King only after Laertes has shown the court that "the King's to blame" for the unbated weapon and for the poisoned drink and for the whole elaborate machinery by which Hamlet was to be deprived of his life and Claudius left safe at last on his usurped throne.

The last scene of the play is, therefore, the triumphant and tragic outcome of Hamlet's patient plotting. One thing more he needs: that Horatio shall survive to tell the world at large all he knows about the Ghost's revelation and the honourable nature of Hamlet's often mysterious conduct thereafter. Hamlet is anxious that his end be reported aright and that he be known to have died with honour: Horatio's report can save him from the ignominy of a "wounded name." "Hamlet's honour *will* stand untainted." This is a consideration which obviously occupies Hamlet's mind and which other characters have expected him to have as a part of his personal and princely equipment. Professor Evans shows us a purposive prince whom we admire, with whom we can sympathise and for the successful accomplishment of whose honourable but tragic designs we are on tenterhooks throughout the play. In such a man there is no room for the screaming hysterics and the psychotic self-abandon which have been so fashionable a part of the Hamlet repertoire for the last thirty years. With his honour, nobility and dignity have also been restored to the Prince.

If Professor Evans can do this for *Hamlet*, what new interpretations can he offer of the other tragedies? He points to an *Othello* in which the motive that initiates the tragedy is the purse: it is Iago's greed which gets him into his first difficulties and causes him to widen the scope of a petty villainy until, eventually, it attacks the very fabric of the state. His version of *King Lear* casts some doubts upon the pre-eminence which the play has enjoyed in recent years, by exposing what amount to dramatic deficiencies—what he calls deficiencies of prodigality—which offer a wealth of practices not brought completely to fruition, nor yet essential to the main plot of the play. Perhaps it is a deficiency in the appreciation offered that the chapter on *King Lear* is so interested in the dramatic intricacy of the play that it gives us little sense of the immensity of the work and no suggestion that the play is and needs to be "prodigal" because it is about the nature of man in a hostile universe.

His central point about Macbeth is also an interesting and absorbing one: "The crucial gap between Macbeth's awareness and ours is simply that we have a moral sense and he has none." Indeed, Professor Evan's Macbeth is a little like T.S. Eliot's Othello, for it is Macbeth's language that hoodwinks us into feeling sympathy for him: "The poetry that Macbeth speaks . . . is everywhere deceptive, its very sound making the speaker seem better than he is; poetry is his mask, like Iago's mask of honesty . . . [he] constantly holds his glittering mask of poetry between his true character and us." Shakespeare creates in Macbeth a man whom we must see as a moral idiot, and yet he insists that we have compassion for him. If we are persuaded of the truth of this paradox by chapter VII, the next chapter, on *Antony and Cleopatra*, has a yet more astonishing series of surprises in store. It would be unfair to expose yet more of Professor Evan's dazzling surprises to the imperfect paraphrase of a brief review, yet it should be remarked that the excellence of this chapter builds upon the arguments which have gone before and relates the Antony of *Julius Caesar* most skilfully and persuasively to the hero of *Antony and Cleopatra*. All three major characters, Antony, Caesar and Cleopatra suffer a sea change into something rich and strange—unexpected yet familiar.

For each of the plays considered (and there are *Timon* and *Coriolanus* to complete the volume) Professor Evans is driven by his preoccupation with practices to ask questions and to perceive answers which present new and refereshing insights into some of the best-known plays in the canon. *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* is such compulsive and persuasive reading that anyone who reaches chapter two will certainly hasten to read the whole book and to re-read it with careful and absorbed re-appraisal. It is a book that will provoke disagreement again and again. Yet the reader who reconsiders the evidences upon which each separate case is based, will find it hard to deny the authority of the argument and will be seduced into agreement by its ingeniousness and by the often epigrammatic subtlety of the language in which it is couched. It is one of the most profitably suggestive books on Shakespearean tragedy of the later twentieth century: not the least successful of its persuasive efforts is that which may persuade a modern generation of playgoers to look once more for a noble and a princely Hamlet on the British stage.

R.N. PARKINSON

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in

Vol. 3 (Winter 1981) No. 2

For back numbers of *Hamlet Studies*,
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Comments and Announcements

Hamlet Studies was in a state of torpor for two years on account of problems with the publisher. The last issue (Vol. 3, No. 1, Summer 1981) marks the reawakening of the journal with a different publishing arrangement. Earlier there were numerous complaints from subscribers about copies not being received; now this will not happen. Surface mail from India to Europe takes about ten weeks; to north and south America and the Far East, twelve; and to Australasia, eight. The maximum time by air to any part of the world is ten days. Subscribers who fail to receive their copies within these approximate periods should please write to the editor. The summer issues will come out in July/August; the winter issues in December/January.

Despite the provision for a forum in which readers will be welcome to give their views on the articles published in *Hamlet Studies*, so far no responses have been received. Readers are invited to express their disagreement/criticism/approbation, to which the authors of the articles concerned will have the option to reply.

As announced in Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 1980, Professor Marvin Rosenberg of the Department of Drama, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720, U.S.A. is editing a new feature for *Hamlet Studies* entitled "Hamlet in the Theatre." Contributions giving accounts of significant moments should be sent direct to him.

The next issue will go to press in the summer of 1983 and be ready for despatch in July/August. For its survival, *Hamlet Studies* needs more subscribers. Readers are urged to use their influence and persuade librarians known to them to subscribe to *Hamlet Studies*.

Bryan N.S. Gooch and David S. Thatcher of the University of Victoria are preparing *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, an annotated bibliography of all music which sets words by Shakespeare or which is connected with his work or name. Communications should be sent to Odean Long, Shakespeare Music Catalogue, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, B.C , Canada, V8W 2Y2.

Louis Marder, editor and publisher of *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, writes: "*SNL* is known, but all who know it do not subscribe. I should have more subscribers. At $6 for individuals in the U.S.A. and $7 for those outside, for four issues, it is certainly cheap enough." His address: 1217 Ashland Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202, U.S.A.

Hamlet: A Grave Scene and Its Audience

BETTIE ANNE DOEBLER

> And the better to print his remembrance in themselves, some have taken a dead mannes head, and kept it in a secret place, and certaine tymes in the week set it before their eyes, and verie well and diligentlie considered it, and by way of imagination kept long talk with it, and this not everie day but once or twice a week, because it so moueth, more our affection, then it would do yf everie day wee should see the same: for by long custom being once made familiar vnto vs, it would move vs nothing at all.
>
> *A Dialogue of Dying Wel*

"Alas, poor Yorick," Hamlet's witty meditation on the skull in the gravest scene in Shakespeare, focuses the coming together of two major traditions surviving into the Renaissance inconography of death: that of the Dance of Death and the *ars moriendi*, or the art of dying well. By the end of the sixteenth century and the early years of the seventeenth the two traditions have moved closer together and at some points conflated. A particular instance of such conflation is the *memento mori* ("Remember that thou too art about to die") scene as the first phase in the structuring of the meditation on death that appears in the opening quotation.[1] The devotional tradition urges such meditation as essential preparation for the actual event of dying well. "Die daily" was the Socratic dictum that had been integrated into the devotional tradition that emerged from the fifteenth-century *ars* texts, but in the case of skulls devotional writers such as the author of the quotation had recognized the value of maintaining the metaphysical shudder through less frequent contact.

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[1] *A Dialogue of Dying Wel*, trans. R.V. (Antwerp, 1603), sig. C_3. William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974). Subsequent quotations will be from this text. See also Harry Morris, "Hamlet as a *Memento Mori* Poem," *PMLA*, 85 (November, 1970), 1035-1040. Cf. also Bridget Gellert-Lyons, "The Iconography of Melancholy in the Graveyard Scene of *Hamlet*," *Studies in Philology*, 67, no. 1 (January 1970), 57-66; Douglas Peterson, *Time, Tide, and The Tempest* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1970), p. 5.

Meditational structures, therefore, that grew up around the reminder that Death (often symbolized as the skull) was an ever-present figure in the midst of life, interacted with popular visual patterns and even individual symbols to elaborate the importance of preparing for death long before the deathbed. Roland Mushat Frye has shown in a recent article some of the rich associations with the skull and funerary art that Shakespeare's audience brought to the popular graveyard scene.[2] This essay further explores the complex strands of commonplace attitudes that provide the dynamic set of associations of the Shakespearean audience with such a scene.

To describe more specifically the process by which Shakespeare's audience was brought to experience a particular drama such as *Hamlet* in dynamic interaction with its own rich associations with death requires some probing of the kind of scene and play that Shakespeare presented them with. We need to recognize perhaps first of all that the stunningly theatrical graveyard scene (V. i) would have also been for *Hamlet's* audience the key scene in the discovery of self and the acceptance of mortality at the heart of the tragedy.

As Douglas Peterson has said in *Time, Tide, and The Tempest*, Hamlet is finally convinced of "a divinity that shapes our ends," the final cause that shapes man's history. It is only within this context of a purposeful world that he finds the freedom to confront mortality. The deep structure of the play is concerned with what traditional theologians called the Last Things. On a philosophical level it reflects Shakespeare's most profound epistemological and metaphysical questionings. On the other hand, as all audiences (not all *readers*) have known, Shakespeare's drama is first and foremost a collection of exciting and fast-paced scenes, a set of incarnate metaphors that exude life and dazzle us with their "presentness" as they move upon the stage. Indeed, our own *real* life fades into dimness before the reality of the illusion. However powerful the intelligible world embedded in those emblems that pass across the stage, any audience, Renaissance or modern, is caught up in the particular affective world of the suffering characters.

Where then does that leave criticism ? Is there a dilemma here that forces scholar-critics either into the camp of the Christian allegorists or that of the positivists—to put a somewhat crude opposition upon the two attitudes which indeed seem to be the polar ends of Shakespearean criticism. It is perhaps obvious to say that all good criticism goes between the horns of such a dilemma because in Shakespeare's text both the values thought to be eternal and those feelings most attached to present situations are structured into convergence within the sublime poetic language of the drama. Shakespeare's high mimetic form, like Van Eyck's painting of *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride*, integrates both particular image and large human theme—in more abstract stylistic terms, the naturalistic and the emblematic. At the same time, in both Flemish painting and the Shakespcarean play (though separated in time) the viewer enters those complexly integrated worlds through the immediate and particular. In the Hamlet scene the audience enters through the low comedy of the clowns juxtaposed with the witty set piece of Hamlet that follows, and finally is brought to witness the tense and moving drama of Hamlet's encounter with Laertes over the body of Ophelia.

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[2] Roland Mushat Frye, "Ladies, Gentlemen, and Skulls: *Hamlet* and the Iconographic Traditions," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30 (1979), 15-28: Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 328-353, argues in his essay on Lear the *presentness* of the characters to the audience. See also my article "Othello's Angels: The *Ars Moriendi*," *ELH*, 34 (June, 1967), 156-172.

To say, however, that the dramatic present is in an important sense primary is not to deny the importance of the emblematic, the point at which audience associations become complexly invoked. Critics do not have to choose between particular and emblematic. It is the rare genius of Shakespearean drama that the universal and the particular are integrated into a sophisticated form. Mimesis and idea are in dialectic both within the structure of the dramatic narrative and as the metaphors interact with the minds of the audience. The immediate drama of Hamlet facing Laertes over Ophelia's grave is played against the old questions and their associations roused already by the iconic and the verbal earlier in the scene. Obviously, I agree with the scholars who believe the religious themes of Hamlet as profound to his audience and consequently profoundly important to a full understanding of the text.

This essay examines the graveyard scene as a resonating symbolic image in the play, especially brilliant in its iconographical focus for the meditation of Hamlet and his audience upon the Dance of Death and the *ars moriendi*. My emphasis will be upon the dynamic relationship between the thematic as shaped by the dramatic surface. Though the whole play contains many of the elements of meditation that Martz has shown to underlie the habit of mind of seventeenth-century poets (and Shakespeare as well), Scene i of Act V is particularly vivid in playing upon the rich intellectual, experiential, and visual immediacy of the stage image, thereby providing an evocative emblematic context for the Renaissance audience.[3]

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[3] See Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) for a full discussion of the influence of the continental patterns of meditation

The action of the play has brought the audience to see Hamlet at a turning point of attitudes towards death upon his return from England as he makes the dramatic and painful discovery of Ophelia's death. At the same time within the stratum of plot he comes into conflict with Laertes and moves forward to the bloody resolution. These plot advances, however, would have been recognized by Shakespeare's community as informed and enriched by the meditative implications of the scene. They take place, of course, within the suggestive context of the Renaissance iconography of death and express several of the most popular conventions within it. A range of emotional responses would have been evoked from an Elizabethan audience by the visual or iconic aspects alone of the stage as graveyard and the ensuing funeral procession of Ophelia.[4] In addition to the stage iconography, centuries of teaching by the church as expressed in popular forms as well as sermons would have brought commonplace associations with themes emerging from the dialogue.

Central to the whole is the fusion of both visual image and language in Hamlet's own meditation on the Dance of Death. That Shakepeare is able to evoke these associations at the same time that he reveals a Hamlet who has come to an acceptance of the nature of man as imperfect and finite shows the sophistication of Renaissance popular theology. Historians are finally now mostly in agreement that the Renaissance in England was not *pagan*—that Christian humanism was a rich blend of classical learning and Christian assumptions that still held on to the experience of life *sub specie aeternitatis*. For the man of Shakespeare's time still, in spite of increasing secularism, would have seen his own life in the light of eternity. The great difference in perspective between the twentieth century and the early seventeeth century is that most Elizabethans at least theoretically could on one level accept the quotation from Ecclesiastes with which the popular preacher William Perkins launched his treatise on the art of

upon seventeenth-century poetry. See also for a brilliant discussion of the emblematic tradition Rhoda M. Ribner, "Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sence* and the Emblematic Tradition," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 17 (1970), 233-258.

[4] The reader should recall that the stage itself was an emblem of life to the Renaissance man, as in "All the world's a stage." The habit of mind which saw in every particular experience a microcosm makes Shakespeare's audience more sensitive to the allegorical than the twentieth century can comprehend. For the development of the *contemptus mundi* theme in the play, see D. R. Howard, "Hamlet and the Contempt of the World," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 58 (1959), 167-175; R. H. Reno, "Hamlet's Quintessence of Dust," *SQ*, 12 (1961), 107-113. I agree entirely with Reno that the key point of the graveyard scene is an acceptance of death, but I see the conventions of popular iconography and devotional writing as immensely enriching this point for a Renaissance audience.

dying: "The day of death is better than the day that one is borne."[5]

A corollary of this recognition that life was only a moment (however rich) before the birthday into the real, eternity, was the dictum engrained in the Renaissance conscience for persons to prepare themselves for death by thinking on it whenever possible and by cultivating meditation upon symbols of it. Countless sermons and devotional treatises urged people to "die daily." Numerous meditations survive that urge such action, as do numerous *memento moris*.[6] The reason for this teaching was not any curious and quaint morbidity such as some twentieth-century critics have attached to it but the popular Renaissance concept that self-knowledge begins in humility, and humility itself begins in the acceptance of mortality,[7] a theme which is crucial to *Hamlet* especially. Of all Shakespeare's heroes he is most speculative about his own nature and most self-conscious about the limits of human nature, as we see most fully explored in the soliloquies. This double assumption about humility led, of course, to numerous meditations about self-knowledge and death, both verbal (especially in popular preaching) and written, as in the devotional tracts of the age, by far the greatest number of books published and sold in London between 1580 and 1620.[8]

Shakespeare's graveyard scene is a meditation on death that moves among three major parts: (1) the argument between the two clowns over the burial of a suicide; (2) the meditation on the Dance of Death by Hamlet; (3) and the experiential encounter with mortality that Hamlet has in his discovery of the death of Ophelia. It is, however, *drama*, not poem. The scene's structure is dramatically parallel in many ways to that of the Ignatian meditation as Martz has described it: the startling *compositio loci* of the grave itself; the intellectual speculation upon its implications; the personal application when Hamlet acts out his intense emotional involvement by literally putting himself into the grave (probably the trap door from which the Ghost emerges).[9] But the dramatic elements, the actual appearance of the funeral procession and the dramatic interaction with Laertes, raise meditation to action.

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[5] *Salve for a Sicke Man* (Cambridge, 1595), sig. A_1. The popularity of such devotional manuals created an audience sophisticated in the theology of death. Thomas Becon, author of *The Sicke Mans Salue* (London, 1582), is especially close to the mood in *Hamlet* in his use of the *ars moriendi* within the context of Christian Stoicism.

[6] Behind the statement is a melancholy assertion of the paradox that through the agony of death one achieves eternal life. Examples of the numerous popular manuals dealing with the art of dying are Christopher Sutton, *Disce Mori* ([orig. ed. 1600], London, 1858); Henry Thorne, *Phisick for the soule* (London, 1570). One of the most widely seen examples of the *memento moris* was the reproduction of Holbein's famous series of the Dance of Death as border cuts for the devotional book known as Queen Elizabeth's Prayerbook: Richard Day, *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (London, 1590). This book went through five editions between 1569 and 1608.

[7] The startling reminder of mortality is, of course, the point of The Dance of Death. For a history of its major international manifestations, see James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Glasgow, 1950).

[8] See Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, 1935) for a full discussion of the popularity of devotional literature.

Act V, Scene i, in *Hamlet* opens in the churchyard with the question raised by one clown as to whether the "suspected" suicide, Ophelia, is to have Christian burial,[10] a theme to recur later in the scene. Shakespeare's audience, upon first seeing such a graveyard scene within the play, must have been reminded of numerous such realities as well as representations in art, many intended originally as *compositios loci* (within the category as defined in Jesuit meditation) to stimulate the soul to meditate upon its own death. In a beautiful fifteenth-century manuscript in the British Museum, probably by the Master of the *Hortulus Animae*, a double-paged illumination appears that is one of the ancestors of Shakespeare's own scene and its many popular variations and suggests something of the context, visual and intellectual, which his audience brought to it. The illumination is from a *Book of Hours* done in Latin, circa 1500, perhaps at Ghent.[11] Probably this particular painting was executed by an assistant to the Master of the *Hortulus Animae* (Gerart Harenbout), a man known as the "Master of James IV of Scotland." The assistant is said to be "harder and more realistic" than his master. The left page contains a triumph of death from the *memento mori* tradition as death takes the hand of a young woman on horseback; the right portrays a gravedigger tossing out a skull to make way for new bones at the same time as a funeral procession approaches.

The double illumination is beautifully executed, and one cannot fail to be struck by the concentration of familiar conventions associated with the Dance of Death. In the left panel the woman on the white horse is portrayed in typical Holbein manner as interrupted in the midst of life. Perhaps all three will die, but the composition suggests the woman alone. She holds a hawk upon her wrist, the wings poised for flight, and the horse itself is in full gallop, all four hooves off the ground. The two men in the background, their backs to the viewer, look as if they are urging her to go off to her left. One has his hand raised and is looking back over his shoulder. The woman, however, is not looking in their direction, but has her head turned to the right, full face to the viewer, eyes apparently oblivious of the three skeletons, two of whose spears point clearly in her direction. Other people, perhaps other hunters, walk the hillside in the direction that the men look and on the far right in that direction is the city of the plain (the world?). Slightly beyond the level of the men, but by no means as distant as the other figures, stands a crucifix mounted on a Gothic pillar. Bordering the page is a warning that either today or the next is the day of reckoning, and at the foot of the page large skulls fill a decorative panel.

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[9] See also Martz (n. 3 above) for a full discussion of the structure of meditation. I am not arguing influence or source here, but pointing out what seems to me a psychological parallel in the movement of the scene, which becomes for its audience, as well as for Hamlet, a meditation on death.

[10] The Queen has testified, as we recall, that death resulted from an accident.

[11] Add. MS. 35313, ff. 1586, 159.

The scene as a whole is a representative version of the *memento mori* scenes that comprise the Dance of Death we know from Holbein—strikingly colored here in brown, rust, white and shades of peacock blue. It is the moment, however, before the skeleton takes the hand of the woman, that moment at which she still seems unaware that her soul will be required of her, the moment that all the devotional literature of the time warned one to be prepared for. Though the lady does not look toward the crucifix, its presence in the illumination makes the familiar point that Christ's mercy is readily available to the repentant sinner.

The painting in the opposite panel is obviously intended to be a companion piece and shows a smiling gravedigger (comic, like Shakespeare's?) holding a skull as he stands in a freshly dug grave. A funeral procession enters the graveyard with a richly draped coffin borne by monks. On the right three youths carry the cross and banners into the cathedral, but the banner most fully portrayed shows the crucified Christ with Mary on one side and the beloved disciple on the other, a parallel indication of mercy with that of the sculptured crucifix on the opposite page. Just above the skulls in the bottom panel (corresponding to those on the opposite page) is a Latin motto rejoicing in death, and bordering the page is a Latin injunction asking for mercy and salvation. Just underneath the skulls is an encouraging Latin motto: *Post tenebras spero luce.*

Taken together, the two paintings provide a meditation on death that in the first panel warns against its suddenness but in the second reassures the viewer of the Christian context of immortality, and, specifically, the mercy that changes attitudes towards death from fear to joy.

The visual impact of Shakespeare's opening of Act V would also have prepared an Elizabethan audience for the familiar themes which the scene contains. I am not arguing a source for Shakespeare's scene but rather an earlier visual focusing of the commonplace tradition. The two are representative of a family of emblematic relationships within the Dance of Death tradition that pervaded English culture most pointedly through the Holbein series and individual variations. As usual, however, Shakespeare turns the old conventions to fresh use, especially in the scene's dramatic closing—but later for that. The scene opens with an ironic treatment of the popular theme of Death as the Great Leveller that is so central to the Dance of Death. The discussion between the Clown and the Other is a lower-class parody of a scholastic argument as to whether Ophelia should be buried in hallowed ground; it becomes perfectly clear in this case that death has not in reality acted as a social leveller. Shakespeare's irony suggests that the "leveling" operates only in the other world. With characteristic freshness and social comedy Shakespeare points out the gap between classes in attitudes toward suicide:

> *Clown:* Why, there thou say'st! and the more pity that great folk should have count'nance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even-Christen. (V.i. 25-27)

The *memento mori* as part of the Dance of Death and as a strain within the *ars moriendi* tradition was, as Clark and others have pointed out, a constant reminder that death may come at any moment in the midst of life and, further, when used within the *ars*, it also was the first stage whereby fear was used to stimulate a man to think on his own death before it was too late. The Dance of Death consisted originally of a series of figures from all strata of society (as shown in their characteristic costumes), both lay and cleric, portrayed often as holding hands in something of a "dance posture" and following the lead of the skeleton-figure death. The best English visual example that I have seen of the *danse* as a whole accompanies the sixteenth-century ballad "The Daunce and Song of Death" and shows the king, the wise man, the old man, the beggar, the child, and the fool in lively dance with three skeletons around a seated partial skeleton labeled "Syknes Deathes Minstrel." The tradition, however, most often developed graphically into *individual* representations of figures from different strata and functions within society as they were approached by the figure of death; these were called *memento moris* and became one mode of the "warning to prepare" that was the first stage of the *ars moriendi*. The *memeto mori* is the point at which the *danse macabre* and the *ars moriendi* meet.[12] The reminder that death might come at any moment was intended

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[11] The *danse macabre* began as a tradition of warning and developed in so bizarre and "macabre" a fashion that it may well have been the stimulus for the tradition of comfort which developed in the fifteenth-century blockbooks and contained the visual and textual instructions for the "art of dying well." *The Ars Morendi* (Editio Princeps, circa 1450), Facs. ed., ed. W. Harry Rylands (London, 1881). This book contains twelve leaves without signatures and with eleven woodcut illustrations of the great deathbed struggle between the Bad and the Good Angels for the soul of the *Moriens* throughout. The earlier text (without woodcuts) apparently came into

ultimately to move the affections of the meditator toward seeking God's forgiveness.

Partly because it was thought of as a first stage of meditation and a shocking one, it was intended to enter the imagination primarily through visual representations and was used as part of the meditative mode that the Jesuits began but by which virtually all of the Christian devotional literature was influenced in the early seventeenth century. Scholars have long been familiar with Holbein's great woodcuts of the Dance of Death,[13] each plate of which is a simpler form of the Triumph of Death mentioned above as illustrated in the manuscript by the Master of the *Hortulus Animae*. But probably few scholars realize how pervasive were the representations of this warning. St. Paul's Cathedral in London contained a famous wall painting of the Dance of Death which was destroyed in the middle of the sixteenth century, but the separate representations known as *memento moris* were everywhere—in stone, in stained glass, on armour, woodcuts, jewelry, plate, and in border engravings by Dürer and Holbein.

Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, the original historian of the *ars moriendi*, sees the *ars* as a method to provide comfort, arising in the middle of the fifteenth century in response to the horrible reminders of the awful angel of death,[14] a speculation which is indubitably true to the origins of he tradition, but by the sixteenth century the comforting tradition of the *ars* and the more frightening tradition of the dance seem to be operating in complementary fashion, and in many instances the initial *memento mori* themes provide the stimuli for the first stage in learning the art of dying well.

To return to Shakespeare's use of this tradition reminds us not only of *Hamlet* but of many of his plays, especially scenes in *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Measure for Measure* and *Henry IV*, *Part One*. Like several other iconic moments, the first section of the scene in Act V of *Hamlet* becomes itself a visual *memento mori*. The graveyard and the grave, however suggested through stagecraft, would have served not only as a reminder of universal mortality to an audience sensitive to this tradition, but as a reminder to think on their own personal deaths. The comic discussion between the clowns, a discussion which alludes to the rumor of Ophelia's suicide men-

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England about 1490 with Caxton's translation of the *Tractatus de arte vivendi et moriendi*.

[13] Hans Holbein, *The Dance of Death* (Facs. of woodcuts from first complete edition: Lyons, 1549), London, 1916.

[14] See Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well* (New York, 1942) for the history of the *ars* tradition.

tioned above, becomes very quickly a parody of a catechism.[15] The humor remains grim and continues the imagery of death in jokes about the gravedigger as a type of Adam.[16] Even the final joke—the riddle of the gallows maker whose "frame outlives a thousand tenants" (V.i. 42)—preserves the atmosphere of warning.

At the same time Hamlet and Horatio approach, the Second Clown exits, and the First Clown begins to sing, again a song that continues the *memento mori* image taken from a poem in Tottel's popular *Miscellany* (printed in 1557), and entitled "A dyttye or sonet made by the lord Vaus in the time of the noble quene Marye, representing the image of Death."[17] The refrainlike use of the song without Hamlet's comments serves as a liturgical element of warning within the meditation.

Hamlet, however, apparently does not recognize the appropriateness of the song and condemns the lack of feeling in the gravedigger's singing at such a time. But as the skull is thrown up out of the grave, Hamlet is drawn into the scene and begins his famous meditation: "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder!" (v.i.73-75). His words proceed in traditional manner to reduce the importance of earthly life, to echo the *contemptus mundi* theme that was so familiar to Shakespeare's audience. Indeed, so fashionable was the meditation upon the skull that in addition to numerous representations by painters of St. Jerome or St. Francis at prayer in the desert before a skull, there is an allegorical portrait of Queen Elizabeth entitled "Of Time and Death," painted after her death, in which she seems to contemplate mortality with the emblem of the skeleton over her shoulder.[18] Hamlet's lines shift the tone of the scene from grim comedy to the more serious meditation with implications for the meaning of existence.

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[15] For the Renaissance mind the sin of despair, which was considered as one of the six sins sins against the Holy Ghost and as such denied the mercy of God, was the major cause of suicide. See *The Boke Named the Royall*, trans. Caxton (London, 1507), sig. Ei$_{v}$.

[16] The analogical habit of mind is so strong in the Renaissance that it occurs in many contexts, though most commonly it appears in a typological reading of the Bible. For example, in Richard Day, *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (London, 1578), the border engravings (by Durer and Holbein) are a treasure-trove of Old and New Testament parallels, e.g., the whale coughing up Jonah; Samson carrying off the doors of the city; Christ rising out of the tomb (Sig. Liiv). The oldest popular source is probably the *Biblia Pauperum*. The Holbein engravings of the Dance of Death appear here also as border illustrations.

[17] See note on the song on p. 380 of the *Hamlet Variorum*, vol. I. The note contains a reprint of the original text of the poem along with some commentary on Shakespeare's changes. All my quotations from the play are taken from this text.

[18] One might make a case for the scene's suggesting the *Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead* as well as that of the Dance of Death. Clark makes the point

After the second skull is thrown up, Hamlet reaches the high point of his witty meditation on the *contemptus mundi* theme:

> *Ham*. There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddets now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of a battery? Hum! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statues, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha? (V.i.93-105)

What is the value of all things men strive for in this life when they are doomed to pass away? Where are the "snows of yesteryear"? The old *ubi sunt* theme is one of the major conventions of the *contemptus mundi* tradition and would have had a number of associations for Shakespeare's audience, but especially effective here is its use in dramatic and ironic context. The audience awaits Hamlet's discovery of the particular death of Ophelia while he generalizes upon the frailty of all worldly things that men value.

Following Hamlet's direct question as to whose grave this is, he and the gravedigger enter into an elaborate exchange of misunderstanding. The ironies double and triple as the gravedigger is led to speak of the mad young Hamlet, and Hamlet himself is distracted by the irony so that he moves away from his original question to a further meditation on the skull of Yorick, this time a more particularized meditation because he actually remembers his father's jester, also reputed to be somewhat mad. But again he makes the same point about the passing of things and ends upon the

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(p. 97) that the key difference in emphasis between the two traditions is that the legend says "As I am, so thou shalt be," whereas the Dance insists on the immediacy of death's presence; both use the same themes. Certainly the former is closer to the *Hamlet* scene, though the scene foreshadows the latter emphasis. One further minor point for at least the suggestion of the legend for the audience is the presence of *three* persons upon the stage during the meditation: the First Clown, Hamlet, and Horatio. This use of the *three* figures is also seen in the triumph of death manuscript illuminations.

theme of Death the Leveler: all men come to this,[19] even Alexander the Great, as Horatio agrees and, in the manner of the lists of types from the devotional tradition, adds another figure from the dance of history:

> Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
> Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.
> (V.i.201-204)

The early section of the scene is meditation structured upon the Dance of Death. Several historic figures have been mentioned, as well as the Yorick known to Hamlet and the type of lawyer that suggests the social comprehensiveness of Death as it levels the social divisions of the Great Chain of Being. The function of the scene is double in that it would probably have suggested to an Elizabethan audience the dimension of the play itself as a Dance of Death through which the audience may sense the fundamental relationships between life and death. Man in order to know himself and his nature must understand his mortality.[20] This is not at all to say that the audience would entirely draw back from the particular dramatic context in order to meditate. Shakespeare maintains too much dramatic control, as we may see in the way in which this rather quietly meditative section moves into the tensely dramatic. But the conventional and generalized character of the meditations up to this point would have been in dynamic interaction with the larger perspective for Shakespeare's audience. Throughout the play Hamlet in his soliloquies has meditated on the value of life itself. The play itself has prepared the audience for the rich ironies of the scene as Hamlet himself has contemplated suicide, damnation, and the puzzling mysteries of his relationship to the dead.

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[19] The best monographic representation of this connection may be seen in the portrayal of the Renaissance beauty looking into her glass and viewing her own skull. John Doebler has pointed out to me the very highly concentrated meditation on mortality when Hamlet answers Claudius's question about the whereabouts of Polonius; he is at supper, where worms are feeding on him. Hamlet generalizes: "... we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end" (IV, ii, 21-24).

[20] See Paul A. Jorgenson, *Lear's Self-Discovery* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 19. He cities Raleigh in his history of the world as stating that man comes to know himself only by facing death. From *History of the World*, bk. V. ch. vi, in *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1829; rpt. New York: Bart Franklin, 1964), VII, 900. Raleigh is not unusual in this emphasis; most of the popular religious tracts on the art of dying-state or imply the importance of meditation on death as part of knowing oneself. It is interesting also to note the very old and popular parallel in epic literature in which the hero only really knows himself after he has visited the underworld; for example, Aeneas is unsure of his mission and his "place," in the Stoic sense, until after he has possessed the golden bough and journeyed into Hades (bk. V, *Aeneid*).

Secondly and more important is the way in which the meditation on death operates in the play itself. In terms of Renaissance theology it gives Hamlet a greater sense of true humility and thus reveals his greater knowledge of himself as frail and mortal,[21] at the same time that it foreshadows his own death at the end. Critics have noted that throughout the play the audience would have seen Hamlet's concern with the nature of man. In this scene he embodies the concern in clearly Christian conventions that prepare the audience—even a twentieth-century audience—for the "flights of angels" at the end. When Horatio speaks the line: "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest," for Shakespeare's audience he suggests the *ars moriendi* convention of the soul being received out of the mouth of the dying by the Good Angel which flies with it up into heaven.[22] There are numerous variations upon the image, but the last woodcut of the *ars* series shows the small figure of a soul issuing out of the mouth of the dying into the hands of an angel. We are intended to feel, as Shakespeare's audience would have felt, that Hamlet lived and died well, fulfilling his Christian-Stoic responsibility. The meditation in the graveyard scene is part of the audience's preparation for the good death that Horatio's words suggest, a good death that does not require all the conventions of the last combat with the devil, but one that has been prepared for by a good life, the major concept of the *ars moriendi* as expressed in sixteenth-century devotional writing.[23] *The acceptance* of Hamlet's own mortality has come earlier.

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[21] The oldest known form of this convention appears in the eleventh woodcut of the *ars moriendi* series, but it is frequently reproduced. In the popular *Boke Named the Royall*, Wynkyn de Worde, (Westminister, 1507), sig. J$_v$ it appears in the section on dying well. Often it takes the form of the familiar opposition between the Devil and the Good Angel for the soul; for example, in a border illustration from Richard Day, *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (London, 1578), sig. Qii$_r$ - Qii$_v$, two men are shown in the field; an angel seizes the soul of one, a devil the soul of the other.

[22] Towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century my reading in the devotional literature indicates a shift from some of the more elaborate deathbed instruction to a greater emphasis on living a good life and constant reading and meditation on death throughout life so that repentance is not left to the last. An exception is the long treatise by Thomas Becon, *Salve for a Sicke Manne*.

[23] See the discussion in the popular and frequently reprinted devotional book by Friar Laurent, *The Boke Named the Royall*, trans. William Caxton (London, 1507), sig. Ei$_v$.

After Hamlet's allusion to Caesar in the graveyard, the meditation suddenly becomes more particularized; Ophelia's funeral procession itself becomes the real *memento mori*, and we realize that Shakespeare's audience would have seen the earlier part of the scene as background to this. As Hamlet returns to his earlier question he notices also the "maimed rites" which suggest suicide and the "desperation" associated with it (V.i. 206-209). His comment is followed by the dialogue between the priest and Laertes, presenting the familiar Catholic attitude towards the suicide who commits the act out of despair, seen by many theologians in the Renaissance as a sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin that denies the mercy of God.[24]

When Hamlet gradually comes to the recognition that the grave belongs to Ophelia, and leaps into it with Laertes, their joint action foreshadows the death that is to come to both of the young men, on stage an image for the Renaissance audience of the shadow that lengthens over the rest of the play. The action has moved away, however, from the intellectualized meditation on death into the existential, with its narrative and dramatic context. The audience is drawn into the immediate concerns of Hamlet's return to the Court and the present angry confrontation with Laertes which prepares for the bloody fencing match at the end. Hamlet's responses also convince the audience (possibly for the first time) of his love of Ophelia. But even so, the passionate intensity of this section of the scene is given a deeper perspective by its parallel to the third stage of meditation, which is intended to show the movement of the affections. Obviously it does not show that penitence and heart-felt devotion which is within the religious meditation. But it does suggest the normal psychological movement of the meditation through the three stages of sense, mind, and heart. At the beginning of the scene Hamlet stands back and *sees* the Dance of Death in the graveyard and its skulls. Then his mind begins to work upon the intellectual implications of the fact of death. Finally he suffers the experience of bereavement in confronting the particular *memento mori* of Ophelia, a suffering which makes him threaten to join her in death:

> . . . Dost thou come here to whine?
> To outface me with leaping in her grave?
> Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
> (V.ii. 265-267)

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[24] In spite of dominant Renaissance attitudes towards suicide, Laertes argues that Ophelia will be a "ministering angel" before the legalistic priest. Donne during this period explored the possibility of circumstances in which suicide was not sin. *Biathanatos* (New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930).

He seeks to prove his love for Ophelia over that of Laertes by his statement that he would "Be buried quick with her."

It is enough. The scene would have aroused associations in the real audience, with all its social range, that would have suggested Hamlet's acceptance of death. From this point on he seems to know himself, to look forward to a divinely shaped end. The meditation has either had its conventional effect, or it has revealed Hamlet's new maturity of spirit—perhaps both. Claudius's statement foreshadows the end: "This grave shall have a living monument." (V.i. 285)

Hamlet, once he jumps into the grave, in an immediate visual sense, becomes a part of the Dance of Death that the scene has conjured up for the audience. On a witty level, Laertes becomes the figure of death tapping him upon the shoulder. Both for the Elizabethan audience and for Hamlet the meditation is complete. In the speaking picture of this scene, both audience and Hamlet have been pulled together in acceptance of death, the limitations of man's mortality; and the resulting perspective gives the tragedy a transcendence beyond the final bloody scene. Angels hover at the end for the Prince who has prepared himself by accepting mortality, even its stench,[25] in the great procession that brings all men into equal humility before the ruins of time.[26]

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[25] See Richard Altick, "Hamlet and the Odor of Mortality," *SQ*, 5 (1954), 167-176, for a full discussion of the metaphorical pattern of the smell of decay throughout the play.

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Hamlet and the Satisfactions of Revenge

MICHAEL CAMERON ANDREWS

In the field of Shakespeare studies, no faction is currently more conspicuous than those critics who seek to demonstrate how Shakespeare's tragic protagonists take corruption from unchristian responses to their situations. Like other protagonists, Hamlet has had his faults set down, his every divagation noted. No longer is it surprising, for example, to read that "Traces of a former Hamlet remain [in Act V], but primarily to provide a dimension against which his fall can be measured. (Milton does something similar with Satan in Book I of *Paradise Lost*.)"[1]

Yet this kind of comment seems curiously remote from what one experiences while reading or watching *Hamlet*. Far from providing a perspective which reveals Hamlet's moral or spiritual inadequacy, the play gives its audience the satisfaction of vicarious participation in an act of blood revenge. For Shakespeare, as I shall argue, not only makes us share in the suffering and final triumph of Hamlet, but exonerates him from any taint of evil.[2]

I shall consider three cruxes—the Ghost's command, the sparing of Claudius at prayer, the killing of Polonius—and then offer a detailed examination of the revenge that Hamlet achieves and we experience.

To begin with the Ghost's command.[3] The murder which the Ghost

[1] Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., *Christian Ritual and the World of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1976), p. 150. Cf. Roy W. Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Arts and Its Christian Premises* (Bloomington, Pa., 1969), p. 250: "At the play's beginning, Hamlet has enough vestigial Christianity to cry out 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us.' But in subsequent moments of elation . . . he forgets any such considerations"; and Harold Skulsky, "Revenge, Honor, and Conscience in *Hamlet*," *PMLA*, 85 (1970), 87: "The tragedy of Hamlet . . . is a tragedy of spiritual decline arrested only by the brief madness of the Prince's final anger."

[2] In "*Hamlet*: Revenge and the Critical Mirror," *ELR*, 8 (1978), 9-23, I discuss audience psychology and the Elizabethan revenge play and attempt to show "that an Elizabethan audience did not necessarily respond to revenge in moral terms; that Shakespeare does not impose moral judgment on all his revengers; and that *Hamlet* would not be a startling play [that is, a radical departure for Shakespeare or his age] if it presented blood revenge in a way that aroused approval as well as sympathy" (p. 23). The present essay may be said to begin where that one ends.

[3] I have given a fuller account of the Ghost in "Professor Prosser and the Ghost," *RenP, 1974* (1975), 19-27; my paragraph here draws freely on this essay.

describes could scarcely have been more hideous: Claudius's poison brought defilement as well as death, covering "Most lazar-like with vile and loathsome crust/All my smooth body" (1.5.72-73).[4] The consequence of dying in a state of sin is yet more horrible; for in addition to violating the most sacred mortal bonds, Claudius's crime extends its devastation beyond the physical and the temporal. Yet though Hamlet must take vengeance on Claudius and put an end to the pollution of "the royal bed of Denmark," the Ghost adds a caveat:

> But howsomever thou pursues this act,
> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven . . . .
> (11. 84-86)

In one hand the Ghost holds compassion: Hamlet must spare his mother in thought as well as deed—neither taint his mind, nor contrive against her. But the Purgatory from which this stage-ghost comes is not characterized by charity: in its other hand it holds a sword. All its vindictiveness focuses on Claudius, "that incestuous, that adulterate beast" (1.42), for whom it expresses contempt, hatred, outrage. Hence—*pace* Fredson Bowers' influential "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge"[5]—the Ghost cannot be saying: "Do not taint your mind with hatred as you punish your uncle." Instead, the Ghost's powerfully emotive address brings home to Hamlet, and the audience, the enormity of what Claudius has done. We are made to feel the horror of the Ghost's plight, the magnitude of Claudius's guilt, and the urgency of revenge.

What, then, is our response when Hamlet "lets go by" his opportunity to kill Claudius? He sees Claudius kneeling near him:

> Now might I do it pat, now 'a is a-praying,
> And now I'll do it.
> (3.3.73-74)

But the drawn sword does not strike. The opportunity, Hamlet reminds himself, is really a form of temptation: this is precisely the wrong moment. His tense triply repeated "now" is retarded by the consequential "and":

> And so 'a goes to heaven,
> And so I am revenged. That would be scanned. (11.74-75)

[4] Quotations are from the edition of Willard Farnham (Baltimore, 1957); I follow Farnham in placing brackets around passages supplied from the Folio.
[5] *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 740-49.

The fit time for vengeance will be when Claudius is ripe for damnation. Hamlet must be kind only to be cruel.

Whatever an audience makes of Hamlet's words,[6] it readily accepts postponing vengeance. For—theatrically speaking—Hamlet's failure to act is not a failure at all. We do not wish him to kill the king at this moment: we want him to wait. But the reason has little to do with moral revulsion or Christian forbearance. The King must live now so that he may die better—that is, more dramatically—later. As engaged spectators sitting at a play, we want the killing of Claudius to be as satisfying as possible. Even if Hamlet could know that Claudius's thoughts are far from heaven, this is no way to kill him. A clash between mighty opposites is necessary: Shakespeare has so played upon us that no mere thrust in the back will serve. As Michael Goldman has observed, "we [have] come to need an ending that will release all our pent-up energies. We need a spacious ending, a great clarifying release."[7] Such an ending, of course, will be provided.

Hamlet, who would send Claudius to hell, cannot leave Gertrude to heaven. He means to bring her to repentance by making her see her guilt. Thus, at the beginning of the Closet Scene (3.4.), he forces her to sit and announces that she "shall not budge" (1.19) until he shows her what she is. What follows happens too fast for thought: Gertrude, fearing that he means to kill her, cries for help; Polonius, in hiding, echoes her call; Hamlet, already struggling with the impulse to lash out, strikes him down. Hamlet does not discharge his violence against any specific person: the response is reflexive, instinctive. "O me, what hast thou done?" asks Gertrude. "Nay, I know not," he admits. But then: "Is it the king?" (11.26-27).

Hamlet appears most formidable as he uncovers the dead Polonius:

> Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell !
> I took thee for thy better.
>
> (11.32-33)

Whether or not we believe he took Polonius for his better, Hamlet's words express no sense of guilt. The dramatic emphasis falls elsewhere—on

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[6] As Fredson Bowers remarks, "Critics are in general agreement that Hamlet's bloodthirsty reasons [for waiting] are a rationalization of (or a recompense for) his unwillingness to kill at this moment." "Dramatic Structure and Criticism: Plot in *Hamlet*," *SQ*, 15 (1964), 213, n. 5. See, however, Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, 1971), pp. 188-93; and Paul Gottshalk, "Hamlet and the Scanning of Revenge," *SQ*, 24 (1973), 155-70.

[7] *Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 88.

Hamlet's efforts to wring Gertrude's heart.[8] It takes the intercession of the Ghost to check his onslaught: "What would your gracious figure?" (1.105). And, starting like a guilty thing, he voices his fear—not that he has done evil by killing Polonius, but that he has been remiss in securing vengeance.[9]

After the Ghost has stolen away, Hamlet clarifies his attitude towards his task. The killing of Polonius, which he first greeted with a kind of bravado, he now repents. But he wears his repentance with a difference:

> For this same lord,
> I do repent; but heaven hath pleased it so,
> To punish me with this, and this with me,
> That I must be their scourge and minister.
> (11.173-76)

Heaven has imposed a duty—a duty which is part of the "cursed spite" of having been born Hamlet. It has pleased heaven to make him the instrument for punishing Claudius. But the role of scourge and minister is a heavy burden: that he must punish seems itself a form of punishment.[10] It is "a contract which calls for suffering."[11] Thus, though Hamlet has been rash in killing Polonius, he is not saying that heaven has punished him by making him kill the wrong man.[12] Instead, his error here is set against the larger background of "what I have to do" (1.130). Under these circumstances, Hamlet feels sufficiently justified. When the facts are known, others will understand how the spy came by his death; Hamlet knows he can "answer well" for it (1.177).[13] And surely we agree. As D.G. James has said, "We see [Hamlet], as he sees himself, as a victim of evil. . . . We give him our admiration and pity, and are carefully directed by Shakespeare to do so; and nowhere does he do what we condemn."[14] For Hamlet "must be cruel only to be kind" (1.179): the bond of nature calls for requiting the "kindless villain" (2.2.566) in whose service Polonius has perished. Though he has begun badly with Polonius, "worse remains behind" (1.180). As revenger he must, in Ophelia's phrase, do "still better, and worse."

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[8] For a discussion of dramatic perspective in this scene, see Robert Ornstein, "Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," *SQ*, 10 (1959), 5.

[9] Nor does the Ghost speak of Polonius: it comes "to whet" the revenger's "almost blunted purpose" (1.112). Cf., however, Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (London, 1960), p. 78: "The ghost indicates to Hamlet and the audience the Christian way by which Hamlet must proceed, and of which he thus far has been incapable."

[10] Cf. Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge." Bowers argues that Hamlet, through his impulsiveness, forfeits his status as the minister of "divinely appointed public vengeance" and becomes a "private-revenger scourge." Unlike the guiltless minister, the scourge is damned. See, however, Ruth Levitsky, "Rightly to Be Great," *ShakS*, 1 (1965), 165, n. 66; and Harold Skulsky, "Revenge, Honor, and Conscience in *Hamlet*," p. 85. As Skulsky observes of "scourge and minister," "a conjunction is a very strange way to add an alternative. What we have here is ordinary hendiadys; Hamlet will be the kind of minister who scourges." See also R.W. Dent, "Hamlet: Scourge and Minister," *SQ*, 29 (1978), 82-84.

[11] Hardin Craig, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (New York, 1948), p. 193.

[12] See Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," p. 746.

The killing of Polonius will, Hamlet knows, "send [him] packing" (3.4.212). Thus, at the end of 4.4, Hamlet departs for England, trusting what is mortal and unsure to the danger of the sea and the serpentine malice of Claudius. That he will return we feel sure, for the expectations fostered by revenge tragedy include a violent consummation: if it be not now, yet it will come. But it is not, I think, so much the conventions of revenge tragedy as the character of Hamlet that makes us look to Claudius for the stratagem which will lead to the resolution of the play. The revenge which is now no more than a bloody thought in a captive's mind will not be planned by Hamlet. It will come as it must, with Hamlet responding to what Claudious provides: the last and most compelling "occasion."

When Hamlet returns from his voyage he seems, as many writers have observed, much altered: older, more detached in his philosophizing, more able to accept his own situation. He who has brooded on death and the shadow behind it is given a graveyard for a stage. He sees from a better angle, and acquires perspective. As Maynard Mack has said, "After the graveyard scene and what it indicates has come to pass in him, we know that Hamlet is ready for the final contest of mighty opposites."[15] We also know that he is ready for death.

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[13] See Myron Taylor, "Tragic Justice and the House of Polonius," *SEL*, 8 (1968), 281. For the view that Polonius's death stains Hamlet with innocent blood which his own death must expiate, see Bowers' "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," "Dramatic Structure and Criticism: Plot in *Hamlet*," and "The Death of Hamlet: A Study in Plot and Character," in *Studies in the English Renaissance Drama . . .*, ed. Josephine Waters Bennett et al. (New York, 1959), pp. 28-42. See also Harold Jenkins, "Fortinbras, Laertes, and the Composition of *Hamlet*," *Rice University Studies*, 60 (1974), 99; and Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 194. In terms of dramatic structure, the killing of Polonius proves crucial; but I do not think an audience would—or should—see Hamlet (in Prosser's phrase) as "morally, legally, and dramatically under sentence of death." The first two assertions take Hamlet out of the theater; the third is true only in retrospect.

[14] *The Dream of Prospero* (Oxford, 1967), p. 31. "The deaths of Laertes and Polonius come not upon him," James continues, "nor, still more surprisingly, does the death of Ophelia."

Late in this scene (5.1), when Hamlet seems almost anaesthetized against both life and death, Ophelia's funeral cortege enters. Shakespeare has saved the worst for last, and Hamlet's philosophic perspective proves to be of no use. But he does not come forward until Laertes' theatrical display of grief triggers a reply in kind. An appropriate culmination of the "maimed rites" of Ophelia, the scuffle in the grave between Hamlet and Laertes prefigures their own "bringing home." Moreover, in a way which prepares us for the play's violent ending, we see Hamlet's capacity to shake off world-weary lethargy when confronted with an "occasion" that provides the proper emotional cue. The death of lovers, at least, can still unleash tempestuous speech and action. And again Shakespeare's dramaturgy makes us see Hamlet to advantage. As John Dover Wilson points out, Hamlet's "affliction even leads us to condone his part in Ophelia's death. The unhappy girl is doubly buried; in the graveyard and in the minds of the spectators."[16]

After the rant and violence of this scene, Shakespeare, who has just taken his protagonist from *contemptus mundi* to a passionate outburst, reinforces our sense of his increased maturity. Hamlet remains Hamlet: it exaggerates the change in him to call him "a new person."[17] Yet there is at this point in the play a great effort to give Hamlet a conception of his destiny that is in the main a new development. Behind the apparent chaos of his life he sees a meaning.

Giving a further account of his escape at sea, Hamlet emphasizes what occurred before his encounter with the "thieves of mercy." He owes his life, he believes, to mysterious Providential intervention: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Roughhew them how we will" (5.2.10-11). Horatio, departing from his usual skeptical role, agrees that what Hamlet says "is most certain."

Throughout the play, *sealing* has been associated with the idea of validation.[18] Now Hamlet reveals how he sought out Rosencrantz and Guildenstern,

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[15] "The World of *Hamlet*," *YR*, 41 (1952), rpt. in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hamlet*," ed. David Bevington (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 63.

[16] *What Happens in Hamlet*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 1951), p. 271.

[17] See Glynne Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage* (New York, 1969), p. 207: "Hamlet ... after his baptism by sea voyage, like Jonah before him, is a new person.".

[18] See 1.1.86, 1.2.60, 3.2.384, 4.3.55, 4.7.1; cf. 3.4.61-62.

> Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew
> To mine own room again, making so bold,
> My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
> Their grand commission
> (11.15-18)

and discovered "royal knavery." This symbolic undoing of the King's deep plot is an apt prelude to direct action on Hamlet's part: before he "could make a prologue to [his] brains, / They had begun the play" (11.30-31)—a play which will end in death for the bearers of the new commission, "Not shriving time allowed" (1.47).

How are we to react to the savage satisfaction displayed here, well after the so-called "new Hamlet" has made his appearance? For by withholding this conversation until after the graveyard scene, Shakespeare obliges us to remember that his protagonist can still relish striking out at those who have injured him.

The killing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is, for dramatic purposes, a matter of far more consequence than their lives. Horatio's role is to bring this out. His first question is prudential, tactical: "How was this sealed?" (1.47). Hamlet's reply, however, emphasizes not his possession of old Hamlet's signet, but the cause of this effect: "Why, even in that was heaven ordinant" (1.48). After this primary concern has been dealt with, Horatio refers, laconically, enigmatically, to the fate of Hamlet's former school-fellows: "So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't" (1.56). Hamlet's splendid justification of his action could not be introduced more effectively:

> [Why, man, they did make love to this employment.]
> They are not near my conscience; their defeat
> Does by their own insinuation grow.
> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points
> Of mighty opposites.
> (11.57-62)

The speech puts "the indifferent children of the earth" in definitive dramatic perspective.[19] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not, and should not be, near our sympathies. They are the King's creatures, and their apparent ignorance of the real purpose of their mission testifies rather to Claudius's secretiveness than to their probity. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are friends who have become thoroughly identified with the interests of Claudius; killing them is an appropriate preliminary to killing the King himself, and suggests that Hamlet may now be ready to strike at his mighty opposite. For he is engaged, in his own image, in a duel to the death.

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[19] See Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison, Wis., 1959), pp. 235-36. Usually, of course, Hamlet is judged and found guilty. See, e.g., Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, pp. 227-29; James L. Donovan, "A Note on Hamlet's 'Not Shriving Time Allow'd,' " *N&Q*, N.S. 3 (1956), 467-69; and John Vyvyan, *The Shakespearean Ethic* (London, 1959), pp. 58-59.

Significantly, Horatio does not register further concern for the way in which Fortune's privates have been given their discharge. Instead, he directs our attention toward the man who had employed them: "Why, what a king is this!" (1.62). The line provides the point of departure for another perspective-giving speech, Hamlet's devastating indictment of Claudius:

> Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon—
> He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother,
> Popped in between th' election and my hopes,
> Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
> And with such coz'nage—is't not perfect conscience
> [To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil?]
> (11.63-70)

The duty of revenge is as strong as ever, but now there is additional personal animus: Hamlet will retaliate against the attempt on his own life as well as for what Claudius has done in the past. Claudius's crimes are broad-blown, as flush as May: he is ripe for destruction. Nor does the action of revenge seem connected with thoughts that puzzle the will. Hamlet's strengthened sense of a divinity that shapes his ends, an ironic consequence of the King's stratagem, has deprived death of its paralyzing horror. This mildewed ear that blights, this cancerous evil, must not be allowed to touch more lives. Hamlet no longer thinks too precisely on the event, for he does not fear it. The action of revenge—revenge that is both satisfying and just—fills his mind. Hamlet seems as ready to kill as Claudius seems ripe to die.[20]

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[20] See also Hamlet's response to Horatio's reminder that Claudius will soon hear what happened in England: ". . . the interim is mine,/And a man's life's no more than to say 'one' " (Folio, 11.73-74). It seems clear enough that Hamlet is speaking of vengeance. See, however, Matthew N. Proser, "Hamlet and the Name of Action," in *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Gordon Ross Smith (University Park, Pa., 1965), pp. 110-11; Gunnar Boklund, "Judgment in *Hamlet*," in *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed.

But the King is more dangerous than Hamlet realizes, and Laertes may not now be described as "a very noble youth" (5.1.211). Consequently, our response to Hamlet's resolution is complicated by the knowledge that Claudius is planning to "put the matter to the present push" (5.1.282). The initiative, which seemed for a moment to be Hamlet's, is really the King's. This is further emphasized a moment later when Osric enters: we relish Hamlet's effortless command of raillery; but we olso realize, as Hamlet does not, that he is being summoned to his death. For this invitation to participate in a fencing match with Laertes, though structurally analogous to the request to speak with Gertrude in her closet, is much more deadly. When Hamlet accedes, he turns his face in the direction from which there can be no turning.[21]

But Hamlet must not be shown approaching death in the spirit with which he dealt with Osric. His willingness to comply with "the king's pleasure" survives his own premonitions of his death. For as he tells Horatio, "thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart. But it is no matter" (ll. 201-02). We feel the pressure of the words, their weight of inevitability. At first Hamlet seems to reject the idea that there is anything meaningful about his uneasiness. Yet after Horatio urges him to obey the promptings of his mind, Hamlet again expresses his new sense of his situation. There is no need to postpone the enactment of what, in the nature of things, must come:

> . . . we defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. It it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. . . . Let be. (ll. 208-13)

It is, then, with a "readiness" based upon his sense of the shaping power of Providence that Hamlet approaches his end.[22] He has come from the "now" of passion, to the "now" of tranquil acquiescence—from "To be . . .?" to "Let be."

Gerald W. Chapman (Princeton, 1965), pp. 133-34; and Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, pp. 229-30.

[21] On the inevitability of Hamlet's death, I agree with Ornstein: "We do not feel that Hamlet must die because he has sinned. The inevitability of his death is an aesthetic, not moral, expectation . . . " (*The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, p. 237). Most critics, as I have indicated, accept Bowers' thesis (see above, n. 6).

[22] See S.F. Johnson, "The Regeneration of Hamlet," *SQ*, 3 (1952), 187-207; Roland Mushat Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 232-33; Fredson Bowers, "The Moment of Final Suspense in *Hamlet*: 'We Defy Augury,' " in *Shakespeare 1564-1564*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Providence, 1964), pp. 50-55. Cf., however, D.G. James, *The Dream of Learning* (Oxford, 1951), p. 63; Peter G. Phialas, "Hamlet and the Grave-Maker," JEGP, 63 (1964), 226-34; and Alfred Warren Friedman, "Hamlet the Unready," *MLQ*, 37 (1976), 15-34.

On this note begins the final phase of the action, designed, as we know, for the fall of Hamlet and the King. We too are ready, but our readiness is of a different order. It is urgent, intense, with nothing of Hamlet's poised tranquility; moreover, again unlike Hamlet, we know it will be now.

Hamlet's apology to Laertes has proved unsatisfactory to many. Yet, as Kittredge points out, Hamlet has little choice but to excuse himself by alleging that he acted in madness.[23] It is clear, at any rate, that Shakespeare intends the speech to increase our admiration and affection for Hamlet, who can now rise out of himself enough to feel deep compassion for a brother's loss.[24] The conclusion, which combines nobility and candor, shows Hamlet "Most generous, and free from all contriving" (4.7.134):

> Sir, in this audience,
> Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
> Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
> That I have shot an arrow o'er the house
> And hurt my brother.
> (5.2.229-33)

And as Hamlet rises, Laertes sinks: "I do receive your offered love like love,/And will not wrong it" (11.240-41). The poisoned foil, however, likes him well.

The King, presiding, echoes his own response to what he had earlier called the "gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet" (1.2.123). Now, however, the disparity between being and seeming has grown more monstrous:

> The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,
> And in the cup an union shall he throw
> Richer than that which four successive kings
> In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups,
> And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
> The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
> The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
> 'Now the king drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin.
> (11.260-267)

We who see the action in its true nature—to apply Claudius's own phrase—know that the heavens will do more than respeak this vaunting "earthly thunder." Claudius has rough-hewn; the final shaping is yet to come. It is beginning now. Hamlet, for his part, will be ready.

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[23] George Lyman Kittredge (ed.), *Hamlet* (New York, 1939), p. 293.
[24] See Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, p. 275.

It has been said that "With this passively active figure in mind, we can justify more easily Shakespeare's use of Elizabethan revenge-play claptrap to end his tragedy: duels, poisoned swords, mistakes, hit-and-miss killings, and desperate acts of suicide. However little we may like this business—this is the way *Hamlet* ends."[25] Yet *Hamlet's* violent conclusion requires neither apology nor condescension, only an openness to the experience of the play. If the rest is violence, it is violence which, in the theater, "rarely fails to produce an overwhelming excitement and *satisfaction*."[26] For almost five acts our desire for vengeance has been played upon. At last, when Shakespeare has wrought us to our uttermost, the hour of blood is at hand. Things happen, not as they may, but as they must.

The match begins, and Hamlet touches Laertes. What the King has seen of Hamlet's skill induces him to interrupt the match; his own poison, he feels at this crucial moment, must kill the son as it killed the father:

> Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine.
> Here's to thy health. Give him the cup.
> (11.271-72)

The pearl, whose "richness" has been blazoned in language as vulgar as it was hypocritical, is emblematic of Claudius and his kingdom of appearances. Large enough, in reality, to contain all the poison the task can possibly require, its size is for us an index of its virulence. But what the courtiers see is unflawed, gleaming beauty: the King, as is his wont, corrupts unseen. For an instant the pearl is clearly visible between Claudius's fingers, a stage image of immense potency. Now it is in the cup.[27]

But Hamlet refuses to respond to his royal prompter; his performance, after all, is not to be shaped at the King's pleasure. The second bout follows; again Hamlet breaks through Laertes' guard. The scenario is not what Claudius intended, yet he is still—and impressively—master of his face: "Our son shall win" (1.276). Nonetheless, in a larger sense, he is no longer in control; the play, hitherto dominated by appearances, rushes towards resolution.

Ironically, it is an act by Gertrude, who has seemed so entirely her husband's creature, which proves decisive. When she pointedly rejects Claudius's admonition not to drink from Hamlet's cup ("I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me" [I.280]), we sense that his power is at an end. Symbolically allying herself with Hamlet, she drinks her death carousing to his fortune; moments later, when she feels the poison working, she will use her last words to accuse her husband and warn her son.

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[25] R.A. Brower, *Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford, 1971), p. 310.

[26] Goldman, *Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama*, p. 147. (My italics.)

[27] Cf. Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, p. 283.

Claudius's love for Gertrude has been, perhaps, his most appealing characteristic: at least he is no hypocrite there. Now, however, as Shakespeare prepares us for Claudius's death, we see the King withdrawing into the circle of himself. For if Gertrude's insistence on drinking to her son shows that it is now more important to her to be Hamlet's mother than Claudius's wife, Claudius's reaction is at least equally revelatory. Though he has loved her more than his soul, he loves his own life more. His plot must not fail—all else must yield to it. Since he cannot save Gertrude without betraying himself, he watches her drink: "It is the poisoned cup; it is too late" (I.281). The priorities of the self-lover are in order.

Under these circumstances, such self-control is monstrous. Accepting the inevitability of Gertrude's death, Claudius goes about the business of looking after himself. It is not too late for him. While Gertrude and Hamlet are symbolically united in a brief tableau ("Come, let me wipe thy face" [I.283]), the King tells Laertes that he does not expect him to have any better success in the ensuing bout. He never speaks to Gertrude again. Though "it is almost against [his] conscience" (I.285), Laertes is by now so frustrated and humiliated that the reproof overcomes his latent scruples. After the bout, in which neither man scores, he suddenly thrusts his rapier into Hamlet. But Laertes has come out from behind the arras of seeming friendship; this is not apparent accident—a foil somehow untipped—but open and treacherous murder. Hamlet sees he has taken Laertes for his better; for though he trusted Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as he would adders fanged, he has regarded Laertes as too noble to smile and be a villain. Disabused, in terrible anger, he wrenches loose the poisoned rapier, and retaliates. Now only Claudius remains untouched by certain death.[28]

Hamlet does not yet realize how little time is left. What the King must do is play the scene to the end, mask intact, never admitting that there was poison on the rapier or in the chalice. Once Hamlet's play caused him to reveal his guilt; this time, playing for life itself, he seems able to brazen it out. Neither pawn nor victim can live; he has only to wait: "Part them," he says of the brawling duellers. "They are incensed" (I.291). The Queen falls speechless; for Claudius, it is better so. At this moment, however, Osric calls attention to what has happened: "Look to the queen there, ho!" (1.292).[29] Thus prompted, Hamlet ceases to concern himself with Laertes; "How does the queen?" he asks. Reaching into his purse of lies, Claudius spends his last: "She sounds to see them bleed" (1.297). In an agony made palpable by wrenched, spasmodic bursts of language, Gertrude finally speaks:

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[28] For a different reading of the fencing match, see James A. Kilby, *N&Q*, N.S. 18 (1971), 142-45.

> No, no, the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!
> The drink, the drink! I am poisoned.
> (11.298-99)

Her last word is rendered incontrovertible by her death. For once Claudius has no words. He waits, silent. Suddenly the wind is southerly. Hamlet turns from the Queen to the plot which has cost her life.

The climactic occasion has come, and Hamlet is ready. Imperiously, he fills the void left by the King's silence:

> O villainy! Ho! let the door be locked.
> Treachery! Seek it out.
> (11.300-01)

In the context of Gertrude's agonized outcry and Claudius's eloquent speechlessness, the strong, balanced dactyls and confident imperatives ring with special power. It is a speech stamped with the royal seal.

We are not merely resigned for Claudius's death: we hunger for it. By now he has forfeited all sympathy. His increase in villainy is accompanied by the sacrifice of the woman he has loved with such consuming intensity. The machiavel survives the lover. In a trap of his own making, this smaller, colder, King protects his life with the tenacity of a rodent.

But, after all the dark corridors of the action, Hamlet must not kill the King in ignorance of the full extent of his evil. Hamlet must act with a full awareness that the King's spreading evil has already given him his death. He has passed through too much for us to wish him anything less than the final clarity of truth. He must not, so to speak, be despoiled of his life as was his father, sleeping, unaware that the poisoner has struck.

[29] Laertes' confession to Osric (11.295-96) apparently escapes Hamlet's notice. Although Osric is sometimes considered privy to the plot, the text provides sufficient evidence of his innocence. By failing to guide Laertes to the unbated rapier, Osric shows himself ignorant of one part of the plot; by calling attention to the Queen's "fall" he shows himself ignorant of the second. In the first instance, Laertes has time to do his part: he finds the rapier and uses it. In the second, Osric's exclusion from the plot proves more costly.

If Hamlet is to triumph, even in death, in a way that will prove thoroughly satisfying to us, there can be no such irony at his expense.

It is for this that Laertes has lived. In a speech that focuses all eyes on the silent King, he confesses his own villainy, declares Hamlet has "not half an hour's life" (1.304), and confirms that Gertrude has been poisoned. "The king, the king's to blame" (1.309). At an earlier time, Hamlet declared himself "Prompted to [his] revenge by heaven and hell" (2.2.570). Then he could do nothing, except devise a means of confirming the Ghost's honesty beyond all doubt; after that, he did nothing which could be construed as a calculated effort to achieve vengeance. The Ghost appeared in the Closet Scene, as Hamlet suspected, to chide a tardy son for letting revenge go by. Now, prompted to his revenge by the Queen and Laertes, at a moment when the King is, from all conceivable points of view, most in need of killing, Hamlet responds with a sudden, shattering release of suppressed violence. We are given what we want: the play, so long dallying with our expectations, moves at last from courtship to consummation.

There have been so many words. Hamlet wastes few now, striking with savage alacrity:

> The point envenomed too?
> Then, venom, to thy work.
> (11.310-11)

The King, still speechless, offers no resistance. The unmasking of his plot has left him paralyzed. The play spares him nothing: not for him the desperate, partially redeeming courage of Richard III or Macbeth. In a direct encounter he is out of his element, impotent. His weapon is poison; symbolically, at least, he wears no sword.

What Claudius's poison can do is shown by the court's response to Hamlet's act: "Treason! Treason!" (1.312). The whole ear of Denmark remains in Claudius's power. At this show of support he takes heart. "O, yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt" (1.313). The line—his last—completes the process of diminution. Claudius, who has lied to others, now lies to himself. For the poison, as he well knows, is mortal. The master realist cannot face the reality of his own death.

There is no time for further speech. Forcing the poisoned wine down Claudius's throat, Hamlet administers the *coup de grace*. Now, in a manner quite unforeseen by Claudius, the King drinks to Hamlet. The justice of it pleases; for as Laertes observes, "He is justly served. /It is a poison tempered by himself" (11.316-17). By his own poison the poisoner falls.

It is sufficient. Revenge has come, terrible and complete, as a consequence of the King's own actions. Hamlet, characteristically, has acted in response to what the King has done—in this sense, with a compelled valor. Yet his vengeance is nonetheless purposive: when the occasion comes, he chooses to act. With the strong infusion of a sense of his Providential role, he has not doubted that the occasion would come. Readiness is all he needs, not the futile rough-hewings of his earlier self. The event fully justifies his faith, for it exemplifies how men may be "guided by the everlasting Justice, using themselves to bee punishers of theyr faultes, and making theyr owne actions the beginning of their chastizements. . . ."[30] Before poetic justice was a convention, it was a concept;[31] and, as a seventeenth century critic confidently asserts, *Hamlet* is sufficiently edifying in this regard:

> Here was a Murther privately committed, strangely discover'd and wonderfully punished. Nothing in Antiquity can rival this Plot for the admirable distribution of Poetick Justice. The Criminals are not only brought to execution, but they are taken in their own Toyls. . . .
>
> The Moral of all this is very obvious, it shews us *That the Greatness of the Offender does not qualifie the Offence and that no Humane Power or Policy are a sufficient Guard against the Impartial Hand and Eye of Providence, which defeats their wicked purposes and turns their dangerous machinations upon their own heads.*[32]

Yet *Hamlet* may scarcely be said to exist for the sake of this excellent moral. It is a tragedy which makes use of Christian concepts, not a Christian play which makes use of tragedy. Nor is it, I think, a Christian tragedy, in the sense that term usually implies. Hamlet's revenge is Janiform: and the face that we see more clearly looks toward the world of men. Despite all Hamlet's faith in Providence, he is no impartial justicer. There is nature in him, as in Macduff, and he performs his duty with a kind of joy, with his best violence. He is a man, take him for all in all, not a passive instrument through whom God's will is done. The killing of Claudius, in short, is an act of justice performed by a man who is a revenger.[33] As audience, we demand no less.

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[30] Sir Philip Sidney, *Arcadia* (1593), ed. Albert Feuillerat, *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney* (Cambridge, 1962), 2.119.

[31] See O.B. Hardison, Jr., "Three Types of Renaissance Catharsis," *RenD*, N.S. 2 (1969), 3-22.

[32] J. Drake, *Antient and Modern Stages Surveyed* (1699), in *Readings on the Character of Hamlet 1661-1947*, ed. Claude C.H. Williamson (London, 1950), pp. 3-4. Cf. G.R. Elliott, *Scourge and Minister: A Study of "Hamlet"* (Durham, N.C. 1951), p. xxi; and Paul N. Siegel, *Shakespearean Tregedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* (New York, 1957), pp, 114-15. For a different perspective, from which the sword "symbolically expresses" Hamlet's own corruption, see Alan C. Dessen, "Hamlet's Poisoned Sword: A Study in Dramatic Imagery," *ShakS*, 5 (1970), 53-69.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare has used Christian eschatology to create a special aura of mystery and horror. The Everlasting has fixed his canon against self-slaughter; Ophelia's death is doubtful, her destiny unknown. To be dead, as Hamlet reflects in his most skeptical moment, may be even more terrible than to live. Man crawls between earth and heaven; but the Ghost endures fiery purgation in a prison house.

That Claudius should die in a state of sin constitutes an essential aspect of Hamlet's revenge. When the King was apparently at prayer, Hamlet declined "To take him in the purging of his soul" (3.3.85). Now the King is cut off in the blossoms of his sin, about an act that has no relish of salvation in it—precisely the condition Hamlet had eagerly envisioned:

> Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
> And that his soul may be as damned and black
> As hell, whereto it goes.
> (3.3.93-95)

The poison on Laertes' rapier might, if Shakespeare had so desired, have been used as the sole means for killing the King. Yet the savage *coup de grace* with the wine is, I think, a necessary action, without which Hamlet's vengeance would seem strangely unsatisfying.[34] We desire to see Claudius's life wrenched from him suddenly, with terrible violence, in a fashion that expresses Hamlet's outrage, sardonic satisfaction, and contempt. Only such an action can set to rest our own emotions: what Hamlet can express, we can experience. By indulging us in violence, Shakespeare sets us free.[35]

But the manner of Claudius's death also keeps Claudius from making so much as a gesture in the direction of God. The poisoned wine seals Hamlet's revenge, for it deprives Claudius of opportunity for confession or repentance. Hamlet is as good as a prompter: suiting the action to the word, the word to the action, he fixes the guilty King in the form he has taken:

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[33] See Ruth Levitsky, "Rightly to Be Great," pp. 160-161.

[34] Cf. John Lawlor, *The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare* (London, 1960), p. 72: "Is it not . . . the last irony that Hamlet's vengeance can consist only in words? . . . The words are all: the deed, the forcing the wine between Claudius's teeth, is splendidly in vain." See also Boklund, "Judgment in *Hamlet*," pp. 135-36; and Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play, and Duel: A Study in Hamlet* (London, 1971), p. 196.

[35] Even Harold C. Goddard, who asserts that Hamlet "was tempted by hell—and fell," says of the killing of the King: "the thrill we get in the theater when the King falls—from which not a single spectator, I believe, is exempt—is not a celestial one. We take the deed *there* as a noble act finally accomplished." Goddard insists, however, that later, "when we recollect it in tranquility," we realize "its senseless and fatalistic character." *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1951), pp. 382 and 380. But as I argue in "*Hamlet*: Revenge and the Critical Mirror" (see above, n. 2), the "double response" theory distorts our experience of revenge tragedy: we are all more moral the next morning.

> Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damnéd Dane,
> Drink off this potion.
> (11.314-15)

From Hamlet's point of view, the King could not have made a better end.[36]

What, then, of the Ghost, whose commandment to revenge Hamlet has finally fulfilled? The Ghost has, in effect, stolen as silently out of the play as it did from the stage in Scene One. Hamlet does not refer to his father in the moment of his vengeance. Does this mean that Hamlet has ceased to concern himself with his original task, and is simply reacting to the King's treacherous plot?[37]

I do not think either revenger or audience has forgotten the Ghost's command. On the other hand, we have no reason to expect Hamlet to overlook what Claudius has just done to him and to his mother. We are meant to feel, I believe, that Hamlet is taking vengeance for all the crimes of "this canker of our nature," present and past. Certainly Hamlet's last words to Claudius direct our attention to the incest and fratricide he was called upon to avenge.

Shakespeare has used the supernatural to serve tragedy; now it can no longer do so. If, for example, the Ghost were to appear for an epilogue, it would surely be deflective: "the point of the denouement must not be that the Ghost is satisfied, but that Hamlet is fulfilled."[38] Now the Ghost could do nothing but narrow the scope of the play; like Lear's Fool, it has served its purpose and is gone. Indeed, if we have leisure to wonder about the Ghost, we are singularly detached from what Shakespeare would have us see.

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[36] See Kenneth O. Myric, "The Theme of Damnation in Shakespearean Tragedy," *SP*, 38 (1941), 229; Proser, "Hamlet and the Name of Action," p. 111. I have examined the symbolism of the rapier and wine in "The Double-Death of Claudius in *Hamlet*," *RenP*, *1970* (1971), pp. 21-27.

[37] Cf. Bowers, "The Death of Hamlet," p. 40: " . . . when Hamlet wounds Claudius and forces him to drink poison, he is symbolically retaliating with the rapier for his own death, and with the cup for that of his mother. In either case he could have pleaded manslaughter on the grounds of hot blood." The argument, which would hale Hamlet from the play to the courtroom, seems an instance of misplaced legalism. See also Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, pp. 237-38.

[38] G.K. Hunter, "The Heroism of Hamlet," *Stratford-upon Avon Studies*, 5 (1963), 107.

What Shakespeare emphasizes is that Hamlet has achieved vengeance without incurring guilt. First there is the moving spectacle of Laertes, who exhibits at his death one glimpse of that nobility for which Hamlet has held him in esteem:

> Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.
> Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
> Nor thine on me!
> (11.318-20)

By having Laertes speak as he does, Shakespeare emphasizes as strongly as possible that Hamlet has come through the play guiltless; for the "rash and bloody" killing of Polonius, Hamlet's most serious error, is here forgiven by the victim's son. Thus Claudius is made to absorb responsibility for the deeds of others; even Laertes receives what amounts to a last-minute dramatic pardon. Denmark's evil rests securely lodged in Claudius. To repeat what Laertes has said: "The king, the king's to blame."[39]

Hamlet's own view of himself remains what it was in the Closet Scene, when he declared that he would "answer well" for Polonius's death. His "wounded name" will be cured if Horatio will absent himself from felicity a while and tell others what the audience already knows. When the fate of Hamlet's good name is so much more an issue than the fate of his soul, we are unlikely to contemplate the latter. Death is felicity because it puts an end to the pain of life: it is without transcendence. Yet a man's name lives after him, and it is not felicity to die corrupted in the general censure. Hamlet dies, still thinking of the world he leaves: Fortinbras "has [his] dying voice" (1.345); "the rest is silence" (1.345).[40] We are directed, in short, to gaze with Hamlet into the future in this world, not toward eternity.

To the perspectives of Laertes and Hamlet, Shakespeare adds Horatio's pious "Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (11.348-49). But we can hardly say that Claudius's death in sin is counterbalanced by Hamlet's salvific ascent. Hamlet dies in this world, not into the next. Instead, these words seem designed as an emphatic reminder of Hamlet's innocence, a dramatic statement that within the confines of the play the revenger has done nothing for which the audience must condemn him.[41]

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[39] The exchange of forgiveness also calls attention to the absence of confession or repentance on the part of Claudius. See esp. Hamlet's response to Laertes: "Heaven make thee free of it [my death]!" (1.321).

[40] For "silence" as a metonomy for death, see Prosser, p. 238. In the First Quarto, as she notes, Hamlet's last words are "heaven receive my soule." The difference is illuminating.

Horatio's reference to angels is followed by the sound of that very secular symbol, the drum of Fortinbras. What Fortinbras and the ambassadors find, upon their entry, is a scene of death. Nor does Horatio mitigate the bleakness of the close by indicating any transcendent meaning behind the events of the play:

> So shall you hear
> Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
> Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
> And, in this upshot, purposes mistook,
> Fall'n on th' inventors heads.
> (11.369-74)

We have here an adumbration of the violent pattern of the play, not a commentary upon its meaning.

The supernatural background has melted into air, and all we see is the "woe" and "wonder" of tragic experience; we confront the harsh world where man draws his breath in pain, yet proves worthy of himself and of his "cause." In the words of Fortinbras, who honors Hamlet with a hero's death: "he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal" (11.386-87). We are left at the last with our experience of all that Hamlet has suffered and performed, and of his final triumph. For Hamlet's long campaign against Claudius ends not only in the vengeance we have so desired, but in the destruction of all that Claudius represents.[42] We know that few wars end so, and that it takes more than the death of a Claudius to purge and regenerate a world. But poetry, as Bacon observes, "give[s] some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it"; and it does so "by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things.[43] Hamlet's final victory gives us a satisfaction impossible in life: we bury him in a triumphant grave. Yet his triumph is mortal and finite: the triumphant grave is nonetheless a grave. We hear no angels at his death. Instead—and fittingly—his "passage" will be marked by "The soldiers' music and the rites of war" (1.388).

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[41] Frye, though he argues against interpreting Hamlet's last words "agnostically," remarks that "Shakespeare was not in the least interested . . . in inspiring his audience to leave the theater contemplating Hamlet in a state of glory, but he was clearly interested in having the audience form an image of Hamlet as he lived and died on the Globe stage" (*Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* p. 53). Cf. Bowers, "The Death of Hamlet," pp. 40-41.

[42] See J. Philip Brockbank, "Hamlet the Bonesetter," *ShS*, 30 (1977), 105. For a different view of the end of the play, see Prosser, pp. 239-40. Bleaker still is the vision of Vyvyan: "To Shakespeare, [Fortinbras'] accession means the defeat of humanity and the perpetuation of genocide" (*The Shakespearean Ethic*), p. 60.

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[43] *The Advancement of Learning*, Bk. 2, in *Selected Writings of Francis Bacon*, ed. Hugh G. Dick (New York, 1955), p. 244. See also Hardison, "Three Types of Renaissence Catharsis," pp. 9-11.

What Fortinbras and Laertes Tell Us About Hamlet

NANCY M. LEE-RIFFE

Though those who have read THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK of course are familiar with the two seemingly minor characters Fortinbras and Laertes, most critics pay them little attention, and the six acted versions I have seen have not preserved the role of Fortinbras as it was written; Olivier's film version (1946), indeed, excised Fortinbras completely. Though Laertes is too much implicated in the plot to be excised, even a deemphasis of the role of Fortinbras distorts our perception of the play. It is my thesis that the play as Shakespeare created it is structured in such a way that these foils cannot be ignored if we want to understand Hamlet, both the protagonist and the play. It is also my thesis that a study of this double foiling device, and especially the role of Fortinbras, reveals the play's thematic emphasis upon responsible rulership and also sheds a less sympathetic light on Hamlet himself than he usually enjoys today.

The resemblances between Hamlet and Fortinbras suggest that they be compared. Each is a Prince, each has recently lost a king-father, and each sees his kingdom declining under his uncle's rule. Fortinbras is on stage only twice, for eight brief lines as he is off to conquer Poland (IV. iv. 1-8), and in the closing lines of the play (V. ii. 373-414) as he returns victorious in time to order the funerals of most of the Danish court and to claim its throne. Much more important is the effect created by the prominance given to Fortinbras in the first two scenes which functions to establish much of the value system of the play's microcosm; and in the court scene in II.ii.

The long 175-line opening scene informs us that the dead King's ghost is walking and that a state of national emergency exists because Norway threatens invasion. None of the main characters is introduced. The reigning King Claudius is not mentioned by name, and is referred to only twice, in perfunctory exchanges of greeting that refer to his office: "the King" (I. i.3) and "the Dane" (I.i..15). The dead King Hamlet is referred to by name only once, belatedly (I. i. 84), after references to "the King that's dead," "the King," "buried Denmark," "the King," "Our last king" (I. i. 41; 43; 58; 80). Thus the focus verbally is on the throne, not on the kings as individuals. The play's protagonist is not mentioned until the closing lines, where Horatio says,

Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet . . . .
(I. i. 169-170)

In other ways, too, this introductory scene focuses our attention on the state of Denmark, and suggests impending national disaster. Horatio immediately concludes, after seeing the ghost, that "This bodes some strange eruption to our state" (I. i. 69). Later, when speaking to the ghost, and assuming that even a dead King thinks first and most about his country's welfare, Horatio implores it:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
Oh, speak!
(I. i. 133-135)

Fears for Denmark are also suggested by references to ghosts that appeared in Rome just before Julius Caesar's assassination.

The first two scenes also identify Fortinbras as the instrument threatening Denmark. This threat is, of course, realized in the final scene; Denmark has been so corrupt and diseased that, by the time it is purged, no royal Dane is left to contest the Norwegian Fortinbras' fairly tenuous claim to the throne.

Descriptions of Fortinbras also create a role model for princely behavior to influence the audience's estimation of Hamlet. When Marcellus asks why "this same strict and most observant watch" is being kept nightly and why other preparations for war are being made in "sweaty haste" (I. i. 69-79), Horatio reminds him that the now dead King Fortinbras of Norway, "Pricked on by a most emulate pride," had challenged King Hamlet to hand-to-hand combat to the death with the agreement that the winner would receive the kingdom of the defeated. King Hamlet "Did slay this Fortinbras" (I. i.80-86). But

young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Sharked up a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't. Which is no other—
As it doth well appear unto our state—
But to recover of us, by strong hand

And terms compulsatory, these foresaid lands
So by his father lost.
(I. i. 95-104)

In even more detail, at the beginning of Scene ii, King Claudius tells the court that Fortinbras, learning of King Hamlet's sudden death, and hoping Denmark will be too "disjoint and out of frame" to cope with the threat of attack, has sent demands,

to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father . . . .
(I. ii. 22-24)

In addition to preparing for war, Claudius sends Cornelius and Voltimand to Fortinbras' uncle, the nominal ruler under Denmark's direction, who is "impotent and bedrid," to order him to suppress Fortinbras' activities.

Some time and several scenes later, Voltimand and Cornelius return and report that "old Norway" had sent for Fortinbras, rebuked him, and extracted his promise "never more/To give the assay of arms against [Claudius]." Pleased with Fortinbras' cooperation, the uncle has given him "three thousand crowns in annual fee" and permission to attack Poland. He now asks Claudius to allow him to march through Denmark (II. ii. 61-82).

Altogether, these descriptions of Fortinbras show us an assertive, aggressive, determined, shrewd, and opportunistic leader, a clever strategist willing to take risks and to strike bargains as well as blows—in short, a proper Prince. Fortinbras is seeking a Prince's retribution for the loss the king's death brought the kingdom and himself, a revenge that is public and princely rather than personal and private in motivation.

Although Prince Hamlet enters with the procession that begins Scene ii, he is not identified until line 65. Then, in contrast with Fortinbras' twice-described aggressiveness, he dramatizes his bereavement before the court, gibing at his uncle-king rather than confronting him. Oblivious to the national emergency that has dominated the opening scene and Claudius' address to the court, this Prince cares only about the upheaval in his personal life. When King Claudius names his successor to the throne (I. ii. 108-109), Hamlet does not even acknowledge that Claudius has spoken. The juxtaposition of Prince Fortinbras with Prince Hamlet suggests that Denmark is threatened by disease within, as well as by Norwegian invasion.

Much later, when Fortinbras appears on stage, our perception is further influenced by the verbal interplay immediately preceding. At the end of IV. iii, Claudius tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern how to dispose of Hamlet in England; Claudius refers to Hamlet as a disease (IV.iii.9) and a fever (IV.iii.68) of which they must "cure" (IV.iii.69) him. Only fourteen words (sixteen syllables) after this word "cure" is used by Claudius to refer to "The present death of Hamlet" (line 67), Fortinbras enters with his solidiers. He is the "cure," we sense from this verbal-visual sequence, though of course it is a different cure from the one Claudius wants. This subliminal suggestion that Fortinbras is the "cure," as well as the threat to Denmark, is fulfilled when he ascends the Danish throne and restores order.

In this first brief appearance, Fortinbras, marching in, sends a terse, largely monosyllabic message to Claudius reminding him of their previously negotiated agreement and adding,

> If that His Majesty would aught with us,
> We shall express our duty in his eye
> And let him know so.
>
> (IV.iv.1-8)

And then he purposefully departs for Poland. In verbal as well as military action, Fortinbras identifies the basic issues and confronts them rationally, immediately, and with regal authoritativeness.

Hamlet's subsequent lengthy self-flagellation (IV.iv.32-66) names for us the difference we have observed in the two: Fortinbras confronts his problems, while Hamlet frets about his

> Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on the event—
> A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
> And ever three parts coward. . . .
>
> (IV.iv.40-43)

Hamlet mockingly comments on the "divine ambition" that drives Fortinbras to fight Poland for a worthless piece of ground, "an eggshell" (IV.iv.47-56). Out of context, Hamlet's derision is appealing and often quoted. In context, however, the audience recognizes Fortinbras' careful strategy that has preserved his troops in the event they can be used to regain autonomy for Norway if opportunity should arise.

The juxtaposition of the two here in IV.iv helps us identify the cause of Hamlet's failure. For Hamlet has failed. Despite the successful guise of "an antic disposition" (I.iv.172) and the clever Mousetrap, which have shown Hamlet's ability to be as adroit an opportunist as Fortinbras, the murderer–King still reigns and Hamlet's own life now is in jeopardy. The turning point arrived when, the Mousetrap having provided proof of the ghost's veracity, Hamlet refused the opportunity to kill Caudius as he knelt in prayer (III.iii.73-95). Had Claudius died then, the throne would have been rid of corruption, and presumably Denmark might have flourished in health. Because Claudius did not die then, many others later died: Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Ophelia, Gertrude, Laertes, Claudius at last, and finally Hamlet himself. In that crucial scene, Hamlet in soliloquy explains why he acts as he does:

> Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.
> When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
> Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed—
> At gaming, swearing, or about some act
> That has no relish of salvation in't—
> Then trip him, that his heels may kick at Heaven
> And that his soul may be as damned and black
> As Hell, whereto it goes.
>
> (III.iii.88-95)

Hamlet's failure thus clearly was caused by his giving in to the personal and passionate desire to revenge his father's death instead of concentrating on his princely responsibility to his nation.

Laertes also closely resembles Hamlet. Laertes is no Prince, but like Hamlet, who is "The glass of fashion and the mold of form" (III.ii.161), Laertes is a courtier, and eventually he, too, unexpectedly loses his father. He appears more frequently on stage than Fortinbras, and it is his on-stage behavior that influences us, though we also hear about his father's suspicions about his Parisian life-style at some length in II.i.

Like Fortinbras, Laertes speaks before the audience is introduced to Hamlet and thus helps shape our initial impressions of the protagonist. After Claudius' speech which begins I.ii, Laertes asks the king's permission to leave court to return to the pleasures of Paris. He has secured his father's consent before approaching the king, he expresses his sense of duty to Claudius, and he conducts the whole interchange with a maximum of pleasantry and courtesy; for instance, though obviously Laertes would have been called home for both the funeral and coronation, he tells Claudius he came "To show my duty in your coronation" (I.ii.53). Immediately after Laertes' courtesies, Hamlet's first line gibes at Claudius: "A little more than kin and less than kind," he calls his uncle-father-king in front of the court which Claudius is obviously trying to impress and trying to unify behind his new rule in opposing Norway. Claudius later mentions that Hamlet has requested to return to the university in Wittenberg, a request Claudius refuses. The juxtaposition of the two young men with similar requests suggests that not only—in contrast with Fortinbras—is Hamlet unmindful of princely responsibilities as Denmark is threatened, but also—in contrast with Laertes—he is neglectful of common courtesy.

Laertes next appears just prior to his departure, reminding his sister Ophelia of the princely duty that may prevent Hamlet from marrying her:

> His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,
> For he himself is subject to his birth.
> He may not, as unvalued persons do,
> Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
> The safety and health of this whole state. . . .
> (I.iii.17-21)

Like the effect of the description of the princely model Fortinbras projects in the first scene, Laertes' words remind us that an English Renaissance prince is supposed to put aside personal feelings whenever they conflict with his duty to his kingdom. Laertes' statement makes clear the responsibility of the prince for "The safety and health" of the nation, and specifically Hamlet's responsibility for Denmark. Hamlet's subsequent interview with his father's ghost rouses him to assume this behaviour at the end of Act I, but even under this powerful stimulus, he shows a great reluctance that does not measure up to Laertes' presumably typical view of princeliness, as he says:

> Oh, cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right!
> (I.v.189-190)

In view of Laertes' statement to Ophelia, it is ironic that when he is next on stage, the loyal courtier and subject is leading "The rabble" (IV.v.101) who cry "Laertes shall be King" (line 106), as he seeks to revenge the death of his father Polonius. All the courtesy and allegiance to king and kingdom and the whole social order have disappeared when he feels personal injury. He rants and rages:

> That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,
> Cries cuckold to my father . . . .
> (IV.v.117-118)

> Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged
> Most throughly for my father.
>
> (IV.v.135-136)

This passion for revenge now makes Laertes the dupe of Claudius. Blindly accepting whatever he is told, he levels his vengefulness against Hamlet; he and Claudius eventually connive an unprincipled murder in the guise of a proper duel before the court. Shakespeare now shows us Laertes as irrational and unscrupulous, a reflection of all the duplicity that has been demonstrated throughout the play, the rottenness in the state of Denmark; his behavior is so conspiciously despicable that there is no posibility of our condoning it. The blinding passion for revenge that led Hamlet to put up his sword vindictively rather than purge the throne of Claudius when he had the opportunity is now mirrored in Laertes' immorality. The extreme behavior of the foil Laertes influences our perception of Hamlet's motivation and the cause of his failure: though we judge him more favorably than Laertes, the similarity exposes his flaw to us unmistakably and helps us evaluate, in the play's own terms, Hamlet's motivation and failure.

Thus the roles of Fortinbras and Laertes, foiling Prince Hamlet, function to establish the theme and value system operating in the play's microcosm. They futher help us identify those elements in Hamlet's behavior that make his a "tragical history." Hamlet fails when, like Laertes, he gives in to passionate vengefulness instead of, like Fortinbras, fulfilling the duty he was "born to," the duty of the Prince "to set things right" (I.v.190) and serve as "scourge and minister" (III.iv.75) to restore his kingdom's health.

NOTES

The Unique 'Flaxen' in Ophelia's Mad Song

J.J.M. TOBIN

The word '*flaxen*' in Ophelia's last song (*Hamlet* IV.v. 196)[1] is unique in the canon, and like other such singular instances as '*fishmonger*' (II.ii. 174, 189), '*fardels*' (III. i. 75),[2] and 'baker's daughter' (IV. v. 43), it exists also in Adlington's translation of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, *The Golden Asse* (1566),[3] a work mined by Shakespeare for themes and diction throughout his career.[4] I suggest that when Ophelia uses the term to describe, ostensibly, the appearance of her late father Polonius, she is in fact continuing that revealing ambiguity begun with her first entrance in this scene. A recent editor of *Hamlet* comments on IV. v. 23-40: "in these snatches of ballads Ophelia seems to be confusing recollections of her lost lover with her dead father. They hint that the cause of her madness is not only her father's death but her estrangement from Hamlet and his banishment."[5]

Ophelia's very real confusion has a source in the confusion created by the 'white lie' told by Psyche in the fairy tale of Cupid and Psyche which occupies the centre (Bks. IV-VI) of *The Golden Asse*. Psyche, under orders from Cupid, her mysterious and as yet unseen husband, not to reveal his true nature, deceives her envious sisters first by saying that her husband is a handsome young man "with a *flaxen* beard" (106)[5] and later, forgetting her earlier version, by telling them that he is a "man of middle age, having his beard intersparsed with gray haires" (110). In her distraction Ophelia repeats the pronoun "he" in the line following "All flaxen was his poll." "*He* is gone, *he* is gone" may well be the iterative of the ballad which she is echoing, but the repetition certainly admits of ambiguity in the mind of the audience where one "he" is Polonius, the other "he" Prince Hamlet, each guilty of a kind of desertion of her, the one whose "beard was white as snow," the other whose poll was "all flaxen."[7]

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[1] Line references are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G.B. Evans, *et al.* (Boston 1974).

[2] There is a 'farthel' in *The Winter's Tale* (IV. iv. 754, 756), another play significantly influenced by *The Golden Asse*.

[3] There were subsequent editions during Shakespeare's life-time in 1571, 1582, 1596 and 1600. Inasmuch as there are elements from plays as early as *Titus Andronicus* and *2 Henry VI*, the edition Shakespeare used could have been that of 1566, 1571, or 1582, each of which differs from the other only in the most minor of accidentals.

[4] See, for a small sampling, D. T. Starnes, "Shakespeare and Apuleius," *PMLA*, 60 (1945), 1,022-1,050; James A.S. McPeek, "The Psyche Myth and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 23 (1972), 69-79; J. J. M. Tobin, "Apuleius and the Bradleian Tragedies," *Shakespeare Survey*, 31 (Cambridge, 1978), 33-43 and "Apuleius and *Othello*," *N & Q*, 222 (1977), 112, and "Shakespeare and Apuleius," *N & Q*, 223 (1978), 120-21.

[5] T. J. B. Spencer in *The New Penguin Hamlet* (Harmondsworth, 1980), 312.

[6] Page references for Adlington's translation are to *The Tudor Translations*, ed. W. E. Henley (London, 1893), iv.

Adding to the probability that Ophelia's '*flaxen*' derives from the '*flaxen*' of Psyche is the clear parallel between the two girls, a parallel begun in Act I, scene iii with Polonius's lecture to Ophelia on the danger of a pre-marital pregnancy resulting from too intimate a relationship with her socially superior lover. Polonius is expressing the same fears as did Venus in *The Golden Asse* when she worried over the potential embarrassment to herself which would be caused by any offspring from the morganatic union of the immortal Cupid and the mortal and pregnant Psyche. The parallel between the two girls continues in III.i.87-9 where Ophelia is addressed as '*nymph*' and is asked to remember Hamlet in her '*orisons*,' even as Psyche is thought to be one of the '*nymphs*' (116), and she does later offer an 'orison' (116). The parallel is concluded in IV. vii where Ophelia's suicidal drowning is modelled upon the near-suicidal drowning of Psyche following her grief over her having been deserted by Cupid.[8]

Still further evidence that Ophelia's creator had been thinking in terms of *The Golden Asse* in IV. iii exists in Ophelia's reference earlier in the scene to the "owl" who "was a baker's daughter" (IV. iii. 42-3), Apuleian elements associated with sexuality, murder, and desertion.

Hamlet may have feared that Ophelia in her appetites and fidelity was or would turn out to be the same kind of girl who had married his father. But it is Ophelia, too, who reads her love in the light of her surviving parent. With pathetic result the images of father Polonius and lover Hamlet merge at the point of male desertion. In her psychologically understandable confusion Ophelia uses the ambiguous pronoun 'he' and the equally ambiguous pronominal adjective 'his' ('*His* beard . . . *his* poll', IV. v. 195, 96), moving from the memory of her father's 'white' beard to her lover's '*flaxen*' poll, the tactile as well as visual adjective which belonged to only the younger one of her source sister Psyche's unreal husbands.

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[7] Editors tend to stress the color of flax, rather than the more intimate texture. Spencer's gloss is "his head was pale like flax," *New Penguin*, 320.

[8] See both "Apuleius and the Bradleian Tragedies," 35-6 and "Apuleius and Ophelia," *The Classical Bulletin*, 56 (1980), 69-71.

Hamlet: A Note on Structure

JOAN REES

The present production of *Hamlet* by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-on-Avon introduces a piece of business into the playing of Act V sc. ii which, small in itself, has far-reaching implications. In the course of the dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio in this scene, Hamlet tells his friend of his discovery of the King's commission for his death and of his own devising of a new commission ordering the immediate execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He passes the original document, the King's commission, to Horatio: "Here's the commission: read it at more leisure."

In the production, Horatio in fact chooses to look at it while they are still talking and exclaims, evidently because of what he sees: "Why, what a king is this!" I wish to argue that this use of the King's commission is unnecessary because there is a direct connection between Horatio's "Why, what a king is this!" and Hamlet's preceding speech; and, moreover, that this connection is of crucial importance in the structure of the play. The theatre business obscures an essential point, one which is also missed by those who, like Wilson Knight, find Hamlet an agent of death and destruction, of greater or lesser moral culpability. A recent example of the approach is a paper entitled "Hamlet's Act of Turpitude? A Puzzle in Characterisation," which was delivered by Dr Theodore Redpath to the Nineteenth International Shakespeare Conference held in Stratford-on-Avon in 1980. Dr Redpath focused attention upon the scene in question and thought it reasonable to suppose that we are meant to be shocked by Hamlet's account of the treatment he has meted out to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. *How* shocked we are meant to be he considered unclear though he thought it likely that in contemporary performances Shakespeare instructed the actors to clarify what he intended. It seems to me, however, that extra-textual advice is not required and that the significance of the dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio at this point is clearly established by the whole context. I have developed a full account of *Hamlet* in my book *Shakespeare and the Story* (Athlone Press, 1978) but here I will set out briefly what seem to me to be the structural principles of *Hamlet* in the light of which this, or any other scene, has to be understood.

Shakespeare has been exceptionally explicit about what can appropriately be called the "deep structure" of *Hamlet* and also about its narrative development. The narrative development is foreshadowed in the ghost's instructions to Hamlet in Act I and Hamlet's response to them; the deep structure, with which this paper is concerned, becomes progressively apparent. In spite of this explicitness, criticism insists on looking elsewhere and relatively minor features of the structure are treated as though they were the very foundations. Some serious distortions result.

There is one major conflict in *Hamlet* and two minor or incidental ones. The major conflict is that most basic one, good versus evil, an agent of moral health against an agent of moral disease. Something "rotten" has to be set "right": this is the foundation on which the story is laid and the first Act of the play is devoted to establishing it. Hamlet himself does not at the beginning, know what the "structure" of the action which he is engaged in may be, but he knows that something is causing him deep disturbance and, when his father's ghost speaks, the nature of the intuitions which have hovered in his mind becomes clear to him: "O my prophetic soul!/My uncle." From that point on, the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius begins, opening with their respective plots to trap each other into self-revelation, and proceeding by stages till Claudius, a damned villain, is killed by the poisoned sword and cup he had prepared for Hamlet. "Mighty opposites" are engaged in the most meaningful of conflicts but, on to this basic situation, Shakespeare has added such seductive subtleties that criticism, ensnared by them, commonly fails to distinguish foundation from superstructure. Most seductive of all is the character of Hamlet and, accordingly, the play's central conflict tends very often to be interpreted as internal conflict, Hamlet fighting with self-doubt, Hamlet violating his own best nature by a course of action which leaves his position morally ambiguous . . . and so on. Less attention is usually paid to Claudius's internal conflict, though it pairs with Hamlet's and serves to balance it. Whatever he was before the play began, the man we see is as self-aware as Hamlet himself, a man capable of love for Gertrude:

> She is so conjunctive to my life and soul
> That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
> I could not but by her . . .
>
> (IV, vii)

and capable also of describing this love as "My virtue or my plague." He is aware that in him love, which counts in most men as virtue, has produced death and deception and, like the plague, it will continue to spread infection. His acceptance of the existence within himself of an irreducible will to prey on and plunder the good things belonging to other men, destroying or corrupting in order to possess, occurs in Act III, sc. iii.

Claudius is no thoughtless or melodramatic villain, and he and Hamlet are well-matched in their awareness, their intelligence, and their hesitation before they finally recognise and accept the roles that the deep structure of conflict in their play requires of them.

When the conflict of mighty opposites is understood as the force from which all else flows, other aspects of the play fall naturally into place. As protagonist and antagonist become more committed to their parts, the struggle becomes dire, admitting of no compromises or distractions. Others, inevitably, are caught up in it and, only imperfectly understanding what is at stake, become victims. Those who are not with Hamlet—only Horatio is and, perhaps, at the end, his mother—are to all intents and purposes against him, cannot be trusted, cannot, in emergency, be spared lest they become a means by which the enemy gains advantage. The conversation between Hamlet and Horatio, in Act V, sc. ii, I take to be crucial confirmation of this account of the deep structure of the play.

"So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't" says Horatio thoughtfully. Thoughtfulness is appropriate, for this, the death of coevals, old companions, sent deliberately to their fate by a mutual friend, is a matter to touch any mind. Hamlet justifies the act. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern chose to ally themselves with Claudius and put themselves at his service. They themselves may have been without malice or evil intent towards Hamlet, but they had nevertheless become instruments through which Claudius intended to have Hamlet killed and they had thus, knowingly or not, become dangerous to Hamlet. Since the king had perverted them and made of Hamlet's friends what were, in effect, his deadly enemies, the moral responsibility for their deaths in "this employment" was Claudius's, not Hamlet's. The emphasis falls on the personal pronoun when Hamlet says, "They are not near *my* conscience." Hamlet's reflection:

> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points
> Of mighty opposites . . .

applies to more than this one episode. It applies also to Polonius and Laertes, and to the queen who drinks the poison intended for Hamlet, and to Ophelia who, like Rosencrantz and Guildernstern, is used as an instrument to trap Hamlet (though, unlike them, she did not "make love to this employment"). "Why, what a king is this," exclaims Horatio, taking up the thread of Hamlet's speech and contemplating the mounting tally of wretched fates deriving from Claudius's original crime and for which he is responsible. For him as for Hamlet, the deep-dyed quality of Claudius's evil is now perfectly clear and to leave more time for "this canker of our nature" to perpetrate further evil would be in itself damnable.

Throughout this dialogue, Hamlet and Horatio speak as close friends whose thought processes are so familiar to each other that they do not need to be laboriously explained. There is a similar occasion, in Act III sc. ii, when Hamlet has succeeded in forcing Claudius to display his perturbation at the moustrap play. He had previously told Horatio of the ghost's revelations and urged him to observe the king closely for signs of his guilt. Now he demands: "Didst perceive?. . . upon the talk of the poisoning?" Horatio replies merely that he did take careful note. He does not find it necessary to add that in his opinion Claudius's guilt is now beyond question. He knows the point of Hamlet's question. He need do no more than confirm the fact—"I did very well note him." All the rest is understood. In Act V sc. ii, also, he sees the point and speaks to it without elaboration. He need not this time answer the question:

> . . . is't not to be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> To further evil?

for he has already assented to Hamlet's identification of the nature of the conflict between himself and Claudius with his "Why, what a King is this!" and Hamlet's question is now purely rhetorical. Instead, thinking along Hamlet's lines, he moves on to consider the practical implication of the situation:

> It must be shortly known to him [Claudius] from England
> What is the issue of the business there

he remarks, implying that the situation has reached a crisis and is full of imminent danger. Hamlet likewise picks up the thought rather than the words. His "it," in the next speech, refers to the period of time which will elapse before news reaches Claudius. He assures Horatio that he fully grasps the urgency and realises the danger: "It will be short. The interim is mine."

To make Horatio critical of Hamlet in this exchange, as some are tempted to, or to fail to see a connection between Hamlet's "They did make love to this employment" speech and Horatio's "Why, what a King is this" is, I believe, to displace the play from its true centre, which is the conflict of mighty opposites.

It is to Hamlet's credit that he pauses at this moment to think of Laertes and regret his behaviour to him. This act *does* lie on his conscience and he wishes to expiate it. He does not, of course, know that Laertes has by this time been suborned by Claudius, but Laertes, also, will in the end have to die for "making love" to the employment of murdering Hamlet. The killing of Laertes, equally with that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, will not lie near Hamlet's conscience and Laertes, dying, explicitly exonerates Hamlet from blame for his own and Polonius's deaths. Shakespeare here, as elsewhere in the closing scenes of the play, is at pains to remove the stigma of guilt from Hamlet--very notably, he frees him from the burden of contriving an elaborate deceit under cover of which to perpetrate revenge on Claudius and he shifts the odium of stage-managing a typical revenge play finale on to Claudius himself.

Hamlet's career in the play (and similarly Claudius's) may be described as a process of discovery of the deep structure which conditions the action. Claudius discovers it in Act III, sc. iii and Hamlet, fittingly, sees too in the same scene that only hell and damnation are the proper destinies of the deliberate evil now embodied in and acknowledged by Claudius. Yet only in Act V, sc.ii, after the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern does Hamlet really understand the dimension and grimness of the struggle and make to Horatio his definitive comments on the whole action. Here, at last, he knows it is "perfect conscience" to kill Claudius and to fail to do this would be to implicate himself in the King's damnation.

The Hatless Hamlet

ROBERT F. WILLSON, JR.

At the beginning of his enlightening book, *The Shakespearean Stage: 1574-1642*, Andrew Gurr asserts that Hamlet performing at the Globe would have been wearing a hat throughout the scene (V.ii.81-194; *The Riverside Shakespeare*) in which Osric, delivering Claudius' invitation to the duel, obsequiously doffs and dons his bonnet.[1] Unless we know that Hamlet is hatted during this sequence, says Gurr, we miss the point of his verbal fencing with Osric. Hamlet makes the courtier look like a fool, but he likewise reveals Osric's deferential nature by pointing out his failure to return his hat to his head. Only in the king's presence did subjects hold hat in hand; but doing so, Osric proves to be the usurping Claudius's "creature." When Hamlet describes the fleeing fop as a baby lapwing "with the shell on his head" (11.185-86), we also receive an apt picture of the type of elongated bowler worn by men in Shakespeare's day.[2]

Gurr's point about the original circumstances of this episode is well taken. Hats were worn by Globe actors because they were performing outdoors, even though many of the events of the play are supposed to be taking place indoors. Shakespeare's audience might well have enjoyed this scene precisely because Hamlet and Horatio keep their hats on while Osric is sent through his mechanical paces. There might be another irony here, however, that Gurr fails to see. Since Shakespeare implies that Hamlet is the natural successor to his father's throne, he could want us to read Osric's excessive deference as the foolish courtier's unwitting recognition of the kingly presence in Hamlet. Certainly an Elizabethan audience would be likely to regard Hamlet as the frustrated king in this scene and elsewhere in the play.

Of equal interest for modern audiences is the fact that performances of *Hamlet* generally do not feature a hatted hero. Indeed, one does not expect to see the other tragic heroes wearing headgear other than the crown. Lear spends much of the play with his poor aged head exposed to the raging heavens. Othello is normally hatless to allow an audience to see his black face and curled locks. Macbeth could be dressed in battle gear during the opening sequence, but he normally appears bare-headed following the murder of Duncan. More than these other figures, Hamlet is conceived as a character for whom any headgear would be superfluous. From the Romantics on, actors of the part have appeared as bare-headed figures whose golden hair seems to highlight his idealistic youthfulness—and his Danish origins.[3] Sir Lawrence Olivier's stage and film Hamlet stands out in this regard, but other recent performances by Nichol Williamson and Derek Jacobi (the BBC-TV production) follow suit. Claudius, Polonius, and Osric may wear hats (Polonius often sports what looks like a skullcap), but these coverings only serve to underscore their villainy. Hats tend to signify age and a deceptive mentality in these figures; indeed, Claudius flaunts a special hat—the crown—which he has really usurped. By contrast, Hamlet and Horatio are played with their heads uncovered to the heavens, underscoring their youth, honesty, and forthrightness. Thus in the witplay with Osric, it is Hamlet's hatlessness that helps to show up by contrast the corruption and deceit of the court. Such a point would not be as forcefully made for a modern audience if all the parties in this scene were wearing hats.

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[1] 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1.

[2] Gurr, p. 2.

In this connection a word might be said about the evolution of Osric's character on the stage. Beginning as a foppish "water-fly," obnoxious but inoffensive, this courtier has emerged on the modern stage as a corrupt time-server who, it has been suggested, was privy to the poisoned sword plot.[4] This transformation in stage treatment can be related to Hamlet's bare-headedness in V.ii. Rather than behaving as just a fool or as Claudius's creature, Osric in his "hat play" could be seen as trying to lure the prince into the fatal duel by not displeasing him. He seeks to please so as to arouse no suspicion in his intended victim. This interpretation tends to give added weight to Osric's character, associating him with time-servers like Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In a play that gives us three types of avenging sons—Hamlet, Fortinbras, Laertes—we might also not be surprised to find multiple types of the self-serving flatterer.

If we are to regard Osric as a demi-villain, however, we must confront the fact that he is not punished at the end of the play. This truth indicates that the attempt to make him into a designing villain, willing to appear the fool in order to win his objective, is probably wrongheaded. The hat in this case does not appear to fit.

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[3] Arthur Colby Sprague and J.C. Trewin, *Shakespeare's Plays Today* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 15. Trewin uses the phrase "stage-Viking."

[4] See J. Dover Wilson, ed., *Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 253.

A Review of Periodical Articles (1980-81)

Remembrance and mourning are the key words in some of the best of the current crop of articles. John Kerrigan,[1] whose essay also has the merit of being amongst the best written, sees the play as steeped in remembrance, from Horatio's celebration of old Hamlet as the representative of a lost age to Ophelia's recollection of a Hamlet whom we never see. Above all in importance is the hero's memory of his father, defined in the Ghost's parting "Remember me." Kerrigan proceeds to argue that revenge matters far less to Hamlet than remembrance, thus solving the problem of delay in a manner which we shall see in one or two other recent essays: Hamlet does not sweep to his revenge because other things are more important to him. As Kerrigan says, Hieronimo stages a play to effect his revenge whereas there is never any question of Claudius being killed at "The Mousetrap": "Hamlet recovers the orchard as Hieronimo the arbour, but the Prince does so because he wants to see his father alive again, and to help the 'great man's memory' survive. Revenge is stifled by remembrance." The play's concern with dramatic performance fits neatly into Kerrigan's thesis: the players fascinate Hamlet "because they make remembrance their profession." Further, Hamlet's obsession with acting draws attention to the theatricality of the play we are watching, so that the character which Hamlet is becomes divorced from the actor who represents him, and each performance of *Hamlet* enacts the dying hero's desire to be remembered. The very sophistication of his argument could be seen as taking Kerrigan into difficulties: is, for example, the belief that a performance of the play celebrates a great man's memory (a step in the direction of drama as ritual) supported by one's responses in the theatre? There is much in *Hamlet* which is self-conscious of its own form; but there is also much which is not. Whatever degree of sympathy one has for his final point, there is no doubt that Kerrigan's essay is one of the most thoughtful and urbane to appear for many years.

Alexander Welsh[2] starts from much the same point as Kerrigan, but he takes the Ghost's "Remember me" to subordinate revenge to mourning rather than remembrance. The two are, of course, intimately related:

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[1] John Kerrigan, "Hieronimo, Hamlet and Remembrance," *Essays in Criticism*, 31, no. 2 (April, 1981), 105-26.

[2] Alexander Welsh, "The Task of Hamlet," *The Yale Review*, 69, no. 4 (June, 1980), 481-502.

mourning is a specific kind of remembrance. To concentrate on the former is therefore to take a narrower, though not necessarily less true, view of the play. One can see the common ground between these two articles when Welsh comments that the " 'delay' of the hero results from the necessity of mourning over an appropriate period of time." Yet, curiously, Welsh finally produces not only a less comprehensive argument, but also a vaguer one than Kerrigan. Treating *Hamlet* as a "fiction of mourning" enables an easier appropriation of some elements (the Ghost's narration provides an "externalization of mourning") than others (what of the players?), but also leads Welsh into a meaningless statement like "Mourning and preparedness for death are tasks for the living, and *The Tragedy of Hamlet* is therefore instructive, a critical affirmation of life." Arthur Kirsch[3] avoids that kind of writing, and produces a more integrated argument with a similar idea to that of Welsh. Kirsch suggests that the heart of the play lies in Hamlet's experience of, and recovery from, grief. At first Hamlet is in the early stages of grief, shocked and incapable of describing that which is not fully expressible. He is also isolated for he receives no sympathy from the court, being rejected (apparently) by Ophelia, betrayed by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and, above all, by Gertrude. By the fifth act, Hamlet has "completed the work of mourning" and grief loses its convulsive effect on him and his world.

The problems with Kirsch's essay lie elsewhere. The core of his argument depends on an evocation of that time-honoured name in writings on *Hamlet*, Sigmund Freud. Rather nervously, Kirsch admits that most of Freud's ideas "can also be found in some form in the vast Renaissance literature on melancholy," but feels that it is Freud's discussion in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia" which best suggests what Shakespeare had in mind. This approach is not unfruitful: if the process of mourning is a struggle between the human disposition to remain libidinally bound to the dead person and the need to acknowledge the reality of his loss, then psychological theory and a dramatic text of genius may well usefully support each other. Yet the effect is to create an uneasy alliance which leads one to an overwhelming question: is *Hamlet* a dramatic experience or a frame to be laid on a couch?

An article by John P. Muller[4] crystallizes the issue. What he provides is basically an expansion upon Jacques Lacan's "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet," an article edited from transcripts of seminar discussion and published in *Yale French Studies* in 1977. Lacan is a difficult figure for literary analysis to encompass, not only because he demands a deep knowledge of psychoanalysis, but because, in Malcolm Bowie's words, the "thinking he shows us is one which inhabits time, proclaims itself as process, and finds its truth in its incompleteness." Lacan's approach to *Hamlet* resembles and develops that of Freud. Lacan, too, stresses mourning, seeing the death of another as opening "a hole in the real"; but he proceeds to apply structuralist and post-structuralist ideas, as when Hamlet is described as being dependent on the signifier of his desire, incarnated in Claudius. The argument is too complex to be properly summarized here, but it is Muller's contribution which requires comment. A good example is his addition to Lacan's "hole in the real," where Muller appositely refers us to Hamlet's wry remarks on Alexander and imperious Caesar in act five scene one: Hamlet, as well as Lacan, associates death with a hole. As in Kirsch's essay, it is the psychoanalyst who provides the ideas and the literary commentator who adds, supports, expounds. Here, in small, is what one, in melodramatic mood, might term the crisis of contemporary literary studies: the really creative work is being done in modes which are not centrally (though they may be peripherally) related to conventional academic methods of approach to literature.

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[3] Arthur Kirsch, "Hamlet's Grief," *ELH*, 48, no. 1 (Spring, 1981), 17-36.

[4] John P. Muller, "Psychosis and Mourning in Lacan's *Hamlet*," *New Literary History*, 12, no. 1 (Autumn, 1980), 147-65.

Yet, as Kerrigan's article demonstrates, sensitive and thoughtful work is still being done within more familiar methods. The problem, perhaps, is one of assimilation rather than of conflict. John A. S. Phillips[5] presents an essay which illustrates the point. He starts from Maynard Mack's now classic concept of a world which Hamlet inhabits, so that Hamlet has to be regarded as an avenger who "questions the reality and effectiveness of taking revenge in the world in which he finds himself." Thus, forced into delay, Hamlet acts through words: words are his daggers, as Gertrude admits, and they are effective in troubling both her and Claudius, who "shrivels as the play continues." The real revenge is psychological, the delay occurs only at the physical level, and the physical revenge comes as something of an anti-climax. Now this last point may, like others in Phillip's article, be judged to be wrong in purely dramatic terms; but what is sure is that his use of "psychological" is that vague one to which the literary world is prone. How many of us have used it in writing or in teaching without a trace of the specificity of a Lacan or even a Freud? One sees what Phillips means, but more precision is desperately needed.

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[5] John A. S. Phillips, "Why does Hamlet Delay?—Hamlet's Subtle Revenge," *Anglia*, 98 (1980), 34-50.

What, then, of studies within a purely literary mode? Our current examples, alas, do not provide much in the way of illumination. Louise George Clubb[6] argues that *Hamlet* reveals a preoccupation with genre, with experimentation in hybrids. It sets out with a tacit analogy with the myth of Orestes: the Ghost raises expectations of a neo-Senecan revenge tragedy, but both are left behind as the Ghost fades and Hamlet "begins to behave as if the case might warrant an Oedipal investigation." Does this say any more than that *Hamlet* is the kind of play (perhaps, above all, *the* play) which constantly defies attempts to pigeon-hole it? But Clubb's method of analysis, ironically, is to use pigeon-holes. The result is a reductive approach which produces such remarks as "by not killing Claudius at prayer Hamlet is rejecting the Sophoclean sequence." There would seem to be one or two more immediate and important things going on than that.

Cherrell Guilfoyle[7] contributes two essays which search for typological meanings in the action of *Hamlet*. The first puts together the fact that "Ophelia," from the Greek, means succour and a reference to Mary Magdalen as "ower swete sokor" in the Digby Magdalen play. The result is the idea that "Magdalen imagery serves to illumine on the one hand the succor which the pure Ophelia can offer through atonement; and on the other, the delusion of female wantonness from which Hamlet suffers." The second piece argues that mediaeval patterns could have been retained in the Elizabethan consciousness (the Conventry pageant plays were performed up to 1579) as justification for seeing the scenic form of *Hamlet's* opening scene as analogous to the staging of the shepherds in the fields in the mystery plays. Shakespeare, therefore, is using a myth which figures forth the manifestation of Christ to the people. Both these essays are well documented and cleverly argued; but the danger throughout, as in Clubb's article, is that earnest pursuit of what lies behind the text can blind one to what lies on the surface of the text. Emphasize the former to the detriment of the latter and you end up, with Guilfoyle, saying that Laertes, by leaping into and then climbing out of Ophelia's grave, is enacting a Resurrection myth in the manner of Lazarus.

The tendency is there in miniature in a note by Marie Collins.[8] She claims that Hamlet's remark to Ophelia, "Lady, shall I lie in your lap?"

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[6] Louise George Clubb, "The Arts of Genre: *Torrismondo* and *Hamlet*," *ELH*, 47, no. 4 (Winter, 1980), 657-69.

[7] Cherrell Guilfoyle, " 'Ower Swete Sokor': The Role of Ophelia in *Hamlet*," *Comparative Drama*, 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1980), 3-17; "The Beginning of *Hamlet*," *Comparative Drama*, 14, no. 2 (Summer, 1980), 137-58.

[8] Marie Collins, "Hamlet and the Lady's Lap," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 28, no. 2 (April, 1981), 130-2.

has, as its basic strategy, the hint that Ophelia is a deceiver. She draws on the story of Samson and Delilah and three sixteenth-century Moral Interludes to suggest that a man lying with his head in a woman's lap traditionally put himself into her power to seduce or betray him. Since Hamlet shows that he knows a lot about drama, we can assume that he understands this dramatic iconography. Since Shakespeare knew a lot about human beings, it is rather more likely that we can assume that he knew what the audience's responses to Hamlet's bawdy suggestions would be.

More successful, but rather limited, are two attempts to focus on the play's essential dramatic qualities. Jean E. Howard[9] investigates the strategies by which Shakespeare orchestrates varieties of kinds of drama in order to sustain an audience's interest. Her comments on *Hamlet* are brief, but she explains how scenes are "figured against" the "ground" of a previous scene with the instance of Gertrude's report of Ophelia's death breaking up male plotting "in a way that forces us to sense how easily the blows of fortune or of fate can mock man's purposeful intents." The flow of dramatic action is indeed something worth more attention than it is normally given. James E. Hirsh[10] looks at the "To be or not be" soliloquy, suggesting that it is a deliberate dramatic ploy on the part of a Hamlet who knows that he is being overheard. Its purpose is to give Claudius a false sense of security by presenting himself not as suffering under a particular grievance, but as a young man with a bad attack of *Weltschmerz*. This does make the speech dramatically relevant rather than an isolated set-piece, but Hirsh has problems with the rest of the scene, where Hamlet, in his attack on Ophelia, clearly gives the game away. The argument that Hamlet loses his composure as the scene proceeds is unconvincing: if he was in control to start with, there seems no real reason why he should not remain so. Still, Hirsh's attempt is a valiant one.

Richard T. Brucher[11] talks about the flow of the whole play. From the assumption that revenge tragedies build on tension between the attractiveness of a witty avenger and the horror of violence, he argues that *Hamlet's* movement is one which gradually confronts the audience with the squalor of violence, more real and painful as the play proceeds. Some of Brucher's points are valuable (he may well be right, for example, that the artifice of the player's Pyrrhus speech and of "The Murder of Gonzago" has a distancing effect which encourages a critical response to the idea of murder), and his overall notion that the play unfolds a critique of crude revenge responses is true enough. There is, however, some over-simplification involved in charting the play's movement in this way: to dismiss Fortinbras, Laertes and old Hamlet as "savage and therefore tainted" images of violent action is surely unacceptable. This is a play which will simply not fit any pattern which is not subjected to rigorous qualification. An article by the ever-ingenious Ralph Berry[12] bears this out. He examines the geography of the play, finding six countries of symbolic significance. Denmark gives us Hamlet's identity, especially through the word "Dane" (a native of Denmark, and its king); Norway presents a mirror analogue to Denmark; Germany, through Wittenberg, offers Hamlet an escape which has to be abandoned for ever; France represents a cultural model, against which, in the figure of Laertes, Hamlet measures himself; Poland is associated with war; England is "destiny, knowledge, reality" which Hamlet does not reach, but which comes to him in the shape of the English Ambassador in the manner of Marcade in *Love's Labour's Lost*. As usual, Berry argues with impressive power but self-consciously impressive rhetoric which delights and infuriates in equal proportions. This is not among his better pieces: it smacks rather too much of the good idea which is forced into a pattern, and his emphasis at the end upon the English Ambassador is not completely convincing. Berry is, however, always worth reading and is never dull.

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[9] Jean E. Howard, "Figures and Grounds: Shakespeare's Control of Audience Perception and Response," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 20, no. 2 (Spring, 1980), 185-99.

[10] James E. Hirsh, "The 'To be or not to be' Scene and the Conventions of Shakespearean Drama," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 42, no. 2 (June, 1981), 115-36.

[11] Richard T. Brucher, "Fantasies of Violence: *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 21, no. 2 (Spring, 1981), 257-70.

It may be suggestive that two of the better articles in this collection take an unusual approach. Michael L. Magie[13] presents an oblique, complicated piece, fascinating in its intellectual probing. His argument is that Hamlet yields a conception of the self which occupies middle ground between "the dualism which affirms the existence of a spiritual entity called mind or self or soul, and the materialism or behaviourism which denies the intelligibility or evidence of a self separate from the body or its actions." Hamlet is not a study in behaviourism, but a character who has constantly to work out his role, his place through a highly subtle and tactful use of language. On the other hand, this supreme manipulator of language does not use language for itself in the manner of "latter-day affirmers of the intrinsic worth of language adeptly maneuvered." Language is never the measure of worth, but one does not have to posit a transcendent soul to avoid such reductivism. Magie's argument is dense, elusive; and his manner is often self-indulgent (it takes nerve to write such things as "I think of Hamlet as a sort of spider . . ."), even annoying. And, interesting as it is, this is ultimately an essay more about the author's philosophical concepts than about *Hamlet*.

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[12] Ralph Berry, "Hamlet: Nationhood and Identity," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 49, no. 4 (Summer, 1980), 283-303.

[13] Michael L. Magie, "Tact, or Hamlet's Bastards," *The Yale Review*, 69, no. 2 (December, 1979), 234-55.

George T. Wright's[14] essay could not be more different. He examines Shakespeare's use of the device of hendiadys, a figure of speech in which two words, usually substantives, are joined by a conjunction, usually "and", to express a single but complex idea. Virgil's usage, he suggests, conveys a dual perception of a dual phenomenon, the "et" registering the separateness and successiveness of the parts of the phrase. With the use of tables, Wright shows that it is *Hamlet* which contains the largest number of hendiadys in Shakespeare's oeuvre, sixty-six out of just over three hundred. There is a difficulty which Wright acknowledges, that it is often difficult to tell whether a phrase is simply formal rhetorical separation ("Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply") or whether a true hendiadys is in operation. The "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," for example, are separate without being complementary (slings do not sling arrows), and yet it is difficult to see what complexity is thereby achieved. More problematical, though, is Wright's application of the device to the whole play. He argues that it both "elevates the discourse and blurs its logical lines," thus helping to create the grandeur appropriate to tragedy and the elusiveness and disjunction that are marks of this play in particular: "in hendiadys, as in the play, we experience an encounter between two mismatched and incommensurable forces, in open and yet obscure relationship to each other." This all sounds fine, but Wright does not really argue the case for his individual examples having such a crucial effect, and it is not easy to see any cumulative effect. Full application of the idea has yet to be carried out; but attention to this kind of detail of Shakespeare's style is a good antidote to more speculative flights of critical fancy.

There are two essays of a rather perfunctory nature on translations of *Hamlet*. Peter V. Conroy Jr.[15] discusses Jean-Francois Ducis's version, which was performed over two hundred times between 1769 and 1851. As a disciple of Voltaire, Ducis produced a play more in the mode of French classical drama than in that of the English barbarian of genius. The comparison is interesting, but does not say much about *Hamlet*. Ulrich

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[14] George T, Wright, "Hendiadys and *Hamlet*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 96, no. 2 (March, 1981), 168-93.

[15] Peter V. Conroy Jr., "A French Classical Translation of Shakespeare: Ducis' *Hamlet*," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 18, no. 1 (March, 1981), 2-14.

K. Goldsmith[16] reviews the progress of French and German translations of Shakespeare, mentioning, as does Conroy, the battle between classicism and romanticism in France. He then takes a detailed look at the versions of "O what a Rogue and Peasant Slave am I!" by Schlegel and Yves Bonnefoy. This is all very plodding, and his concluding remarks on translation's search for perfection "till the ultimate silence is reached" are simply ludicrous.

A pleasant piece by Leigh Woods[17] discusses the effect of Garrick's acting of Shakespearean heroes on people's view of them. Garrick, being short in stature, produced a view of heroism as domestic and vulnerable, including a Hamlet not so much aristocratic as accessible. There are two short interpretative articles of differing value. Robert Bozanich[18] discusses Hamlet's little poem to Ophelia, with its repetition of the word, "doubt," which could have both its modern meaning (to tend to disbelieve) and its archaic opposite (to tend to believe). As Bozanich says, the result is to make Hamlet's exact meaning highly ambiguous. The point is worth emphasizing, although the basic idea is familiar enough (it is mentioned in Harold Jenkins's note in the new Arden *Hamlet*). Anthony S. Brennan[19] quotes from Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* (1601) to support the currency of the belief that rats revealed themselves behind "a painted cloth." Whether or not this really gives added piquancy to Hamlet's suspicion of a rat behind the arras in the bedroom scene is another matter.

Other short notes are more interesting. A nicely learned discussion of Hamlet's bare bodkin comes from E.A.J. Honigmann and D.A. West.[20] Pointing out that this is a very Senecan soliloquy, they speculate on whether Shakespeare would have known of Seneca's mention of suicide with a "scalpellum," translated by Thomas Lodge as "lancet." This translation was entered on the Stationers' Register in 1600, but there is no proof that any copy was printed at that date. "Bodkins" turn up in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* (as the instrument with which Caesar is killed) and in *A Golden Mirrour* (as the instrument of Cleopatra's suicide). Richard

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[16] Ulrich K. Goldsmith, " 'O what a Rogue and Peasant Slave am I!'—Hamlet in English, French, and German," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 17, no. 1 (March, 1980), 66-84.

[17] Leigh Woods, "Crown of Straw on Little Men: Garrick's New Heroes," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32, no. 1 (Spring, 1981), 69-79.

[18] Robert Bozanich, "The Eye of the Beholder: Hamlet to Ophelia, II. ii. 109-24," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31, no. 1 (Spring, 1980), 90-2.

[19] Anthony S. Brennan, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet* III. iv. 22-26," *The Explicator*, 38, no. 3 (Spring, 1980), 43-4.

[20] E.A.J. Honigmann and D.A. West, "With a Bare Bodkin," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 28, no. 2 (April, 1981), 129-30.

Jacobs[21] goes in for textual speculation in Polonius's artful, if really rather matter-of-fact, words to Ophelia in act one scene three. The conventional reading, following Collier, is "not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,/ Running it thus," but Pope suggested "Wronging" rather than "Running", and Inez Scott profferred "ring" for "wind." Jacobs puts the two together, and argues that the result produces an appropriately elaborate word-play involving sexual and monetary meanings: in cracking the ring of the phrase, Polonius is deflowering the word and turning it into unlawful currency. This is a pleasing solution, but involves some rather dubious manoeuvring from Q2 and F "winde" to "ring." An emendation put forward by Robert T. Levine[22] has already been peremptorily dismissed by Harold Jenkins. Levine's idea concerns the interchange between Hamlet and Ophelia in act three scene one, where, as the text stands, Hamlet's comment about the company honesty should keep is answered by Ophelia on what company beauty should keep. Hamlet's following "Ay, truly," Levine thinks, makes no sense unless "beauty" and "honesty" are exchanged in Ophelia's speech: "Could honesty, my lord, have better commerce than with beauty?" It is more likely that a deliberate battle is in progress, in which both speakers are very much aware of their order of priority.

The eminent Arden editor himself appears in *Notes and Queries* to place before us another no-nonsense dismissal.[23] Hamlet's account of his sea-voyage differs in Q1 from that in Q2 and F, and some have supposed that this version provides a clue to the contents of the *Ur-Hamlet* (surely one of the most talked-about nothings of our time). Jenkins refutes any such suggestions by stating that Q1's description contains nothing not derived from the Shakespearean text. For example, Q1's "the contention of the windes" is a confused recollection of Q2's "Sir in my hart there was a kind of fighting/That would not let me sleepe," by which internal turbulence has become external storm. Jenkins's assertions are authoritative, as, indeed, they ought to be.

Finally, readers of *Hamlet Studies* will recall that this review has been much occupied with Ophelia's long purples. Frank McCombie[24] now has a note on the garlands in which she is found dead. He argues that the herbal associations are quite specific and have as their referrents pain and sex. Just as Lear made his garland out of the preoccupations of his deranged mind, so, suggests McCombie, might Ophelia have done. This all depends on the vexed issue of the interpretation of flowers' symbolism: is the daisy related to the pains of age (McCombie) or to love? McCombie is on the side of the sexually-suggestive orchid as far as the long purples are concerned, and Jenkins in the Arden edition also supports this. It looks as if the *arum maculatum* is defeated: a case of out, damned spot?

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[21] Richard Jacobs, "Sex and Money: A Note on *Hamlet* I. iii. 108-9," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31, no. 1 (Spring, 1980), 88-90.

[22] Robert T. Levine, "Honesty and Beauty: an Emendation for *Hamlet*, III. i. 109-10," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 27, no. 2 (April, 1980), 166-9.

[23] Harold Jenkins, "Hamlet's Voyage," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 28, no. 2 (April, 1981), 135-6.

[24] Frank McCombie, "Garlands in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 28, no. 2 (April, 1981), 132-4.

W. HUTCHINGS

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